



In the wake of Zheng He.

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Winter wonderland.

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Chinese driver ready for desert challenge in Dakar Rally

Liu Bin will drive the Mitsubishi team's Pajero Diesel in the T1 Diesel 4WD production model class in the 29th Dakar Rally, which sets off tomorrow from Lisbon, Portugal.

Photo provided by Mitsubishi Motors

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New regulations for foreign journalists take effect

New Year's Day saw only a few foreign journalists in Tiananmen Square, in the past a favorite haunt of overseas media looking to ask Chinese people about their hopes for the coming year, Xinhua reported January 1.

Some journalists chose to travel to other parts of China for more important news, a task made easier by new regulations that came into effect Monday that allow foreign reporters more freedom.

Reuters filed a story datelined Hohhot on Monday, becoming the first foreign media outlet to report from a city other than Beijing or Shanghai without having first applied to the authorities.

In the Reuters story, their reporter wrote that, "foreign journalists had needed government

permission to report outside their home base, usually Beijing or Shanghai, but under the new rules, which came into force on Monday, they need only the agreement of the person they are interviewing."

The new 'Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists during the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period' state that foreign journalists need only obtain the consent of interviewees to interview organizations or individuals in China.

The new regulations also allow foreign journalists to hire Chinese citizens to assist them in their reporting activities. And relax other restrictions.

Foreign media organizations reacted instantly to the new regulations. NBC decided to send

journalists to China; the Associated Press planned to hire local staff to enhance its China reports and the number of *New York Times* journalists in China rose to five, making its Chinese bureau its largest in Asia.

Benjamin Lim of Reuters, who has been in China for ten years, told Xinhua that he interviewed a person on Monday without going through an application process, as he had been obliged to in the past, which he said was really a step forward.

Lim had long wanted to interview the person, however, he was unable to conduct the interview until Monday due to the complicated application process.

At the end of December 2006, China was host to 606 resident journalists from 319 foreign news

organizations representing 49 countries. Most were based in Beijing and Shanghai, according to figures from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

About 3,000 to 5,000 foreign journalists come to China for short-term assignments every year over recent years.

China has grown to be the world's fourth largest economy and foreign media coverage of China has risen sharply in 2006, Cai Wu, director of the Information Office of the State Council, said.

Liu Jianchao, spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry, said foreign journalists would enjoy more and more freedom, as well as an improved working environment in China.

(Source: Xinhua; By He Jianwei)

Body of American climber found, companion still missing

By Jiang Xubo

The body of a US climber who has been missing for more than a month was found on a remote mountain in southwestern China's Sichuan province last Wednesday. A second mountaineer is still missing and presumed dead, said the Sichuan Mountaineering Association (SMA), involved in the search and rescue operations.

The body found at an elevation of some 5,000 meters on Genie Mountain has been identified as Charlie Fowler, one of the missing mountaineers. The body was transferred Saturday to the custody of the US Consulate General in Chengdu and a cremation will take place within several days, the SMA revealed.

"The victim's family, colleagues and the US Consul General in Chengdu have identified the body as Charlie Fowler's, two days after we found the body last Wednesday. We reached a consensus that an avalanche had claimed his life," Lin Li, secretary-general of the SMA said last Saturday.

Christine Boskoff, another climber, remains missing. Two Sichuan-based military helicopters, which were sent by the Chinese Ministry of Defense in response to the call for assistance, tried to conduct further search for Boskoff last Sunday. The aircraft, however, failed to land because of bad weather.

"Christine Boskoff was buried under heavy snow. We are not sure of her whereabouts at the moment," Lin said. "In addition, the temperature has dipped to -20°C degree in the evenings, and it is snowing now. It would be too difficult and hazardous for the established teams to continue the search for Boskoff. Both we and the American people have agreed to halt further search for the moment."



China Customs officers have successfully bred their first pedigree sniffer dog puppy.
Xin Hua Photo

Olympic torch readied for Mountain Everest

By Jiang Xubo

A rehearsal for the Olympic flame's first trip to the top of the world will be held this year, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games (BOCOG) announced this week.

"This rehearsal will be very important for a successful torch relay for the Beijing Olympic Games on the world's highest peak," Liu Jingmin, BOCOG vice president, said Tuesday.

"The torch is specifically designed to burn at high altitude. The design is now in its final stages, and we are training torchbearers for the rehearsal," Liu added.

The torch will reach the peak of Everest from its southern slope before bearers carry it down along the northern face, BOCOG revealed.

The ascent of Everest, which will be broadcast globally, is expected to be one of the highlights of the torch relay for the Beijing Olympics.

China promised during its Olympic bid over five years ago that it would bring the Olympics Games' flame to the world's highest peak.

Passport application speeds up

By Annie Wei

The Municipal Public Security Bureau's Exit and Entry Management Section recently announced their simplified passport application procedure, in support of China's Passport Law.

The law was approved in April 2006 and changes the validity period of a Chinese passport from five to ten years, said Feng Chunling, vice director of the Exit and Entry Management Section. However, persons under 16 years old will still be provided with passports valid for only five years.

The law also set 15 working days as the time limit in which government offices, across the nation, should complete the passport processing. In Beijing's Exit and Entry Management Section, however, everything can be done in only five days, said Feng.

In recent years, more and more Chinese have gone abroad for business, travel or to visit family and friends, so obtaining a passport has become a necessity. In 2006, Beijing had 737,000 overseas travel applications, a growth of 13 percent compared to that of 2005.

Translators needed for Olympic Games

By Jackie Zhang

Translators for several languages, including English, French, Spanish, Russian and German, are being recruited worldwide by Beijing Yuanpei Century Translation Company.

Yuanpei made a joint announcement with the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) and became the official translation and interpretation supplier of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games last weekend.

As an essential service for the games, translation plays a vital role. Yuanpei plans to set up a professional translation and interpretation team to provide language services for the Olympics.

"We are now recruiting full-time and part-time translators. English and French translators are in big demand," Landy Wang, a Yuanpei recruiter, said.

"Both Chinese applicants and foreigners are required to have at least a university undergraduate diploma. Of course, they also need a good command of Chinese. We're also recruiting polishers for our news releases. Knowledge of Chinese is not required," Wang said.

Foreign applicants, especially polishers, must have related work experience or a suitable background. Applicants can forward their resumes to: yuanpeihr@sina.com.

Italian official receives environmental award

By Han Manman

Corrado Clini, an official from the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory, is the first foreigner to be awarded the municipal government's Beijing Environmental Protection Star. The competition was designed to acknowledge individuals who have helped make Beijing a better place to live in.

He was also honored with the Great Wall Friendship Award, the

highest award Beijing bestows on foreign experts, for his efforts in establishing an environmental protection partnership between China and Italy.

"Clini was a candidate recommended by the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau. He won the award through thousands of local citizen's vote," said Zhang Baosen, director of the Center for Environmental Education and Communication in Beijing.

Through Clini's work, the Italian government has invested more than 30 million in bilateral environmental projects in Beijing, Zhang said. These include converting city buses to run on natural gas and establishing air quality monitoring systems used in daily weather forecasts. For the Olympic Games, they put up a solar energy system at the Olympic Village that will supply hot water and electricity even after the Games.

Ghoulish pet owner bleeds stray to save prize cat

By Chu Meng

A white stray cat brought this Wednesday to the emergency room of downtown Beijing WAWA Animal Hospital almost died after having its blood taken by a ghoulish owner looking to save his fancy pet.

Yesterday, after 16 hours of treatment, the stray finally regained consciousness, but remained very weak. The cat, nicknamed Big White by veterinary staff, was still lying in the emergency room bed with a transfusion needle attached to its leg.

Liu Meiyun, the Good Samaritan who saved the cat from death at the hands of a heartless pet owner, said, "We have had it on a normal saline and white protein drip for a second night. It seems to have passed any danger of dying now."

Liu said the owner of an expensive Siamese cat, in collusion with

Beijing Saijia Animal Hospital, had almost killed Big White in a gruesome blood-harvest aimed at saving the pampered Siamese. Tuesday afternoon, the Siamese needed an urgent blood transfusion, but Saijia Animal Hospital had no blood in stock matching the animal's rare type.

Liu said, "Unbelievably, the Siamese cat owner brought in eleven stray cats a few hours later, that he'd caught around the neighborhood he lives in." The cruel pet owner was offering the strays as involuntary blood donors. Tests showed that only the cat now known as Big White had blood matching the Siamese's rare type.

A nurse extracted three syringes of blood, about 80 ml in total, from Big White, and transfused it to the Siamese cat. Big White immediately fell unconscious on the operating table, its

eyes closed and breathing very faintly. Other pet owners who witnessed this grotesque performance were incensed at the animal hospital's treatment of the unfortunate stray cat.

Liu said, "The hair on its neck had been shaved off and you could clearly see four bloody needle marks. The cat owner and the pet hospital refused to do anything to save the dying stray. They wouldn't even give it a standard saline drip. We were really angry and ended up in a row with that immoral cat owner and the vets. We ended up taking the dying cat to the Beijing WAWA Animal Hospital."

However, doctor Chen from Saijia, who was on shift that afternoon complained, "We just extracted 40ml blood from the homeless cat, far from the fatal amount for a cat. The Siamese cat was diagnosed with anemia

on December 5 in our hospital."

Liu has spent 1,600 yuan trying to save Big White, but she is pleased to have done so. She decided she would adopt him once he gets out of the hospital. Big White is past the crisis now, a WAWA vet says, and on the road to recovery.

Vet Xu Xinling from the International Center for Veterinary Services (ICVS), one of the few international standard foreign-directly-invested veterinary clinics in the city, said yesterday, "No matter how much blood vets at Saijia Animal Hospital extracted from the stray cat, and whether or not doing so endangered it, they had no right to treat any animal, even a stray, like that. It is immoral."

Xu said clinics should breed their own healthy cats and dogs as blood donors, being sure to only extract strictly limited amounts.

Asian students care about looks, US peers self-satisfied

By Han Manman

More Asian high school students say they are conscious about how they look than do their America peers, according to a survey of young people's attitudes carried out in China, Japan, South Korea and the US.

Young Koreans seemed to care most about appearances, with 83.2 percent of those surveyed claiming to care about their image, followed by 68.5 percent of Chinese students and 66 percent of Japanese. US students admitted the least interest at 33.4 percent, according to figures reported in the survey.

US students display the greatest 'individuality,' with 88.2 percent agreeing that, "people should look out for their own interests instead of others." This figure was much higher than the 69.6 percent agreeing in Korea, China's 48.8 percent and Japan's 47.6 percent.

And generally speaking, American students are the most satisfied with themselves, followed by Chinese students and Korean students. Young Japanese are the least satisfied with themselves.

Chinese students evaluated their Korean peers most highly, believing Korean students to be kind and well-mannered. However, Korean students did not reciprocate this esteem, giving the lowest evaluation of Chinese students, who they think are unobservant and not sufficiently hard-working. American students reported the highest evaluation of their Chinese peers.

The survey, conducted by the China Youth and Children Research Center, the Japan Youth Research Institute, the Korean Youth and Children Development Institute and a US company, is the first of its kind. A total of 7,304 high school students from 156 schools were surveyed over the course of a year.

A tradition of renewal



People of the Hani ethnic group in Yunnan province celebrate Gatangpa, a traditional festival of renewal, at the beginning of the year.

Xinhua Photo

The very model of an ancient Tartar capital

By Annie Wei

As urban regeneration and property development see much of old Beijing disappearing under the wrecking ball, a small group of enthusiasts are trying to preserve the memory of the ancient capital by building a replica of the city in miniature.

The group, 'Liuzhu Beijing' (Keeping Beijing), is a not-for-profit volunteer project. Leading member Yang Yi is a stagecraft designer, with all the skills necessary to make models of traditional Beijing streets and scenes.

The projected replica will be a 1:25 scale replica of the old city, featuring its signature hutong lanes and alleys, courtyard houses, and notable buildings such as the old provincial guild halls, theaters

and the former residences of some of the many famous people who spent at least part of their lives in what was once the Tartar capital of Kublai Khan.

"The special engineering skills and art forms of China's ancient architecture have thousands of years of history, but no one can deny much of the built legacy is disappearing fast. Future generations will only be able to appreciate it from historical records," Yang said, "That's the main reason we want to record these beautiful things in a vivid and precise replica."

Yang's group is not the first to attempt to record historical Beijing; many photographers, both professional and amateur, are attempting to preserve the old city in pictures. The Liuzhu Beijing project is far

more demanding, requiring much collection of information including surveying still extant buildings. This week, Yang and two fellow group members have been busy in Dashila in Qianmen, measuring doors and other architectural details so they can reproduce the street in scale miniature.

It is not an easy task. Yang says the group currently only has a few members and he fears their survey work cannot keep pace with the ongoing demolition of old Beijing. One reason that group membership is small is Yang's preference for volunteers with a civil engineering or architectural background.

Yang expects the project to take a year to complete, and is seeking venues to display the replica city when it is finished.

Government lists media contacts

By He Jianwei

Beijing municipal government last Saturday released a list of spokespersons who will act as media contacts for domestic and international reporters. The list included office phone numbers.

The list named 98 spokespersons and gave 95 telephone numbers for the institutions they represent, including the Standing Committee of Beijing Municipal People's Congress, and Beijing Higher People's Court.

The named government bureau spokespersons are deputy directors of their agencies, whilst district governments will be represented in the media by deputy district heads. Two spokespersons were named for the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games: Wang Wei and Jiang Xiaoyu, the two most senior officials listed as contacts.

The list is designed to make it more convenient for foreign journalists to arrange interviews, a spokesperson for the municipal government said.

As of January 1, all foreign journalists who need to interview representatives of work units or individuals in China will be able to do so, so far as they have the consent of the prospective interviewee, thanks to new regulations on the activities of foreign journalists which will be in force in the run-up to and during the 2008 Olympic Games.

"It is a modern government's responsibility to use the media to inform the public of its work," Zhang Nongke, spokesperson for Beijing's Municipal Committee of Construction, said.

Brief news

Record high fiscal revenue

The capital's fiscal revenue reached over 111 billion yuan (US\$12 billion) last year, up more than 21 percent from that of the previous year and exceeding US\$100 million in a single year for the first time, according to the municipal financial bureau.

Increased tax take

The country's total tax revenue rose to over 3.7 trillion yuan (US\$470 billion) last year, up some 22 percent on that of 2005, the State Administration of Taxation announced this week.

Fire casualties

The country saw a total of nearly 223,000 fires nationwide last year, leaving some 1,500 people dead and more than 1,400 injured, the Ministry of Public Security announced this week.

Fewer road deaths

A total of some 89,400 people were killed in traffic accidents last year, down more than nine percent from that of 2005, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

New government website for complaints

A new government web page where Internet users can register complaints about official malpractice has been established at www.mos.gov.cn/gjb, Qu Wanxiang, vice-minister of Supervision, announced last Saturday.

(By Jiang Xubo)



Psychology applied in Correction Centers

By Jackie Zhang

A group of women of various ages cover their eyes with scarves, keeping silent and communicating with fingers or stomping. They are told to line up according to their individual numbers without saying a word.

It is a psychological game played by new arrivals at the Beijing Women's Camp of Reeducation Through Labor. "The game is to help them find more ways to communicate, and to get accustomed to a strange environment," said Wu Lihua, psychological counselor at the camp.

Beijing's southern Daxing District is home to most camps of reeducation through labor, or *lao jiao suo* in Chinese. People who are guilty of illegal acts but who have not broke criminal law are detained here for reeducation. Here, the police act as psychological counselors responsible for detainees' emotions and thought.

Escaping the shadow of addiction

Fan Wenyong is the psychology counselor at Beijing Xin'an Camp of Reeducation through Labor. He majored in law while in university, and was fascinated by psychology. When he started to work in the reeducation camp, he found out how necessary psychology was in helping detainees and began to study on his own. This June, he was certified as a professional psychology counselor.

"My first case was in April, 2005," Fan Wenyong recalled. "The man was about 30 years old and came to the camp for drug abuse. He couldn't sleep and felt anxious all the time. He always quarreled with others. He was reserved and did not like to say too much. It was the third time he had been to camp for drug abuse. He was very nervous and afraid he would take drugs again

when he returned home."

"I helped him with a technique called systematic desensitization. I asked him to imagine his life when he returned home, and then, his former drug-abusing friends, and gradually, asked him to imagine a small package of drugs in his hand. At first, he rejected and feared the drugs, but finally, he could face his past and drugs. He went home last July and I phoned him afterwards. His girlfriend answered the phone and told me he was very well."

Psychological counselors in camp

The Beijing Women's Camp is located near Beijing Xin'an Camp of Reeducation through Labor in Daxing District. Many women here are being reeducated for selling pornography discs and prostitution.

Wu Lihua, a psychology graduate, started to work in the women's camp in September 2002. "At first, I worked there an ordinary staff member," Wu said. "At that time, there was a woman with a foul-temper here. She was a hunchback who hated herself. Even though she'd been in many classes, no matter which class she went to, she quarreled with everyone there. Then, she was sent to my class."

"I found her bad temper was mainly caused by self-hatred. Although she was very irritable, she was nimble-fingered and liked writing. I talked with her often and helped her to recognize her talent. Once she concentrated more on the things she liked, she forgot her disadvantages. She changed gradually and liked to communicate with people. I think it was my first case."

Another of Wu's patients was a woman with a serious obsessive-compulsive disorder. "Wang Ling (not her real name) was extremely prideful. She always compared herself



Women meet for group psychological consultation in the Beijing Women's Reeducation Camp.



People are doing psychological catharsis in the catharsis room.



Fan Wenyong guides a man in sand-play therapy.

Photos by Fan Xuliang

with others. When her class's manager asked me to help her, her symptoms were serious. She pulled at her hair like it would help pull the bad thoughts out of her head. She told me she was worried her husband cheated on her."

When Wu probed into why the woman was so disturbed, she realized it was because of the award system in the camp. "Every three months, the camp evaluates people's behavior and awards a selected few. If chosen, the detainee has a chance to return home sooner. Wang came to the camp in a group with six other women. The other six were praised, but never her. Therefore, it was the neglect left her disappointed." Wang began to believe she was not as good as the others and became more and more anxious. "It is natural for obsessive-compulsive people to transfer their worries to a loved one. So Wang began to intensely suspect her husband."

"The best way to treat obsessive-compulsive disorder is to coax the patient into giving up their need for control. They do not have to obsess over every thought to enter their head. It is just not necessary. I helped Wang relax her body first, giving her some medicine to reduce the symptoms. Then, I worked with her to transfer her focus to interesting activities like assisting her class manager. Wang has already returned home. She was well when she left and had a better relationship with her husband."

Bringing teens back from the edge

Yu Zhaoyang used to be a primary school teacher, and now works in the teens' reeducation camp. "My most impressed case, and also the comprehensive, was Wang Yulin (not her real name)," Yu said. "Wang was 13 years old when he came to

the camp in 2004 for severely injuring others."

"He couldn't face what he'd done and didn't communicate with others. He always had nightmares, which were dreams of hurting others or being hurt. He shut himself off and wouldn't let anyone else in. It was hard for me to understand him at first. I tried to get him to trust me. I talked with him about the Internet and online games. Gradually, he'd smile when he saw me. I told him he could try to solve his problems through psychological counseling. One day, he finally came and asked whether I could help him."

"I helped him with Systematic Desensitization, asking him to relax when thinking about his past. Gradually, he was more outgoing and his nightmares became less frequent. He made many friends in the camp and could face what he'd done."

The number of police psychological counselors in the reeducation system is increasing.

"Starting in August 2004, the Bureau began to select police for psychological training and organized exams to certify them. There are 65 professional consultants with national certification in the camps now," Ji Zhibin, a representative from the education department of Beijing Administration Bureau of Reeducation through Labor, said. "Another 38 police had been just tested. The results will be released later, but I expect most will be certified."

"Nearly all the police working in the reeducation centers have psychological training periodically," Li Jing, the political commissar of Beijing Xin'an Camp of Reeducation through Labor, said. "All the police need basic psychological knowledge to work well and get along with the people being reeducated in the camps."

By Han Manman

China's first solo sailor, 38-year-old artist Zhai Mo, will set out alone by sailboat tomorrow from Rizhao in Shandong Province on his one-man quest to circumnavigate the globe.

Before the interview, his friend Wang Dong-fei said Zhai rarely talks about himself to others. Getting information from him in an interview is

like pulling teeth. Even in his news conference, he said less than five sentences, leading reporters to believe he's very reserved, Wang said.

The first time I phoned Zhai, he was panting, said he was in the middle of repairing his boat, and asked if I could call another day. It took four days of calls before I had a chance to connect with Zhai again.



Zhai Mo poses with one of his paintings



Chinese artist sails the world

Zhai Mo's around-the-world dream will soon come true.

Photos provided by Zhai Mo

The voyage

For his sea route, Zhai will sail from Rizhao, the Chinese Water Sport City, by way of Ningbo. Then on to Meizhou Island, Quanzhou – the start of the ancient 'maritime silk road' – Victoria Harbour and the Xisha Islands. After that, he'll head for Jakarta, cross the South China Sea, pass

through Bay of Bengal, then head for the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, around the Cape of Good Hope, up to the Mediterranean, west to the Caribbean and so on.

Zhai will pass through more than 40 countries and regions in the Pacific, Indian Ocean and the Atlantic, then eventually return to Rizhao for a total 300,000 miles at sea over one year.

The start of the trip coincides with admiral Zheng He's route six centuries ago. If Zhai succeeds, he will surpass Zheng He and set a new sailing landmark in Chinese history.

"I prepared this voyage for almost six years," Zhai said. Six years ago, when Zhai bought his first boat, he dreamed of sailing around the world. However, his first boat cost 400,000 yuan and was too small and weak to withstand big winds on the open seas.

Worth a million yuan, Zhai's current boat is 12m long and 3.8m wide. Zhai said he chose to start his journey in winter, because even though it's cold, it's a safer season for sailing.

Norwegian couple changed his life

Zhai, at 16, came to Beijing alone to start work. He drew billboards, did independent canvas work, and even some jobs in film and television. In 1998, he was invited to France and New Zealand as a young modern artist to hold his personal exhibition.



Zhai and the Norwegian couple



With aborigine friends

"If I hadn't held the exhibit in New Zealand and met with the old Norwegian couple, I'd have never had the chance to sail the world," Zhai said. "When the couple said they had already sailed one and a half circles around the world and described how beautiful the journey was, I made up my mind to start my own trip. I sold all my pictures to buy my first boat – a second hand boat that was eight meters long." At that time, Zhai didn't even know how to sail his boat back home. The seller helped him sail home, and taught him how to steer and use the sail. After that day, Zhai moved everything he owned onboard to begin a life at sea.

From February 2000 to

August 2001, he sailed around New Zealand to visit local exhibitions of Polynesian aborigine art, and to open his own painting exhibits. In September 2001, he set out from Auckland on the eight-meter boat and crossed the South Pacific Ocean.

In the last few years, Zhai has faced many dangers on the high seas: storms, billowing waves, submerged rocks, shark attacks and food shortages. One time, Zhai sailed into a typhoon that shredded his sails. The seawaters crashed onto the boat and flooded his cabin. Zhai tied himself to the boat and injected anesthetics into his injured foot, then closed his eyes and tried to blank. Three hours later, the typhoon passed, and the battered Zhai emerged from his cabin to sail again.

He said no matter what dangers he meets, he will never give up sailing. "Danger is nothing compared with nature and all the interesting things I've been able to experience. I've made many friends in odd places, even many aborigines."

Future plans

After Zhai finishes his voyage, he will prepare for the Vendee Globe competition in 2012. He will not only be China's first representative, but also the first representative from Asia.

The Vendee Globe is a round-the-world yacht race held every four years. It's defined by three additional factors: boats must be

manned solo, the race is run non-stop and competing sailors are prohibited from receiving any sort of assistance along the course for five months. All who enter must have voyaged around the world at least once.

"It is the highest class voyage competition in the world, and the harshest competition. Everyone who fancies sailing dreams to join. However, every time, at least one player dies or goes missing. There has never been an Asian player in the competition before: I will be the first," Zhai said.

To join, players must own a 60-inch standard boat valued at more than 20 million yuan. Players also need to find enough sponsor to join the event. Zhai said the State Aquatic Sports Administration Center and China Yachting Association would sponsor him in the competition.

After the Vendee Global, Zhai's next challenge is a voyage around the Arctic Ocean. No one has ever succeeded yet. "I'd prefer to keep this secret from my family. I don't want them to worry about me. If they see it in the media, I'll tell them it isn't true."

As for sailing in China, Zhai said there's a giant gap. He hopes people will see his voyage and take an interest in the sport. "Sailing is very popular in western countries, but few Chinese people are familiar with it. I hope my journey will raise interest in ocean exploration and culture."



Zhai's sailboat

Bus passes pass on, replaced by swipe cards

BEIJING (PTI) - Millions of Beijingers have bid farewell to the monthly bus pass, available to city residents for 56 years, after the local administration replaced them with electronic pre-paid cards.

The move came as the municipal government encouraged people to make full use of the public transport facilities ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The capital introduced monthly bus cards in 1950 as part of its social welfare system. However, the cards proved loss-makers for bus companies, and reduced passenger numbers on bus routes where the monthly bus cards could not be used.

Cui Jinhu, a saleswoman, said she had mixed feelings about the monthly bus cards.

Though she knew the cards were "behind the times," they have been part of city life for more than half a century. "I will keep the old bus card as a souvenir," she said.

A trader, Wang Hua said the new electronic pre-paid card was very convenient, especially since the government will offer a hefty 60 percent discount on fares.

A heated debate on changing the monthly bus card system has rumbled on for years. Authorities were wary of reform since any change might hit low-income groups hardest, people already on the losing end of the widening income gap in the Communist nation.

To keep the cost of a bus trip down, the city government offers a 60 percent discount for those using electronic cards. Passengers swipe the cards each time they take a bus, deducting the cost of each trip from their stored credit.

The Beijing government decided to invest an extra US\$166 million in 2007 to improve public transport, bring-



Officials hope Swipe cards will entice people to use public transportation.

CFP Photo

ing total investment to US\$511 million. The cancellation of monthly bus cards will help attract more passengers to travel by bus rather than in private cars and taxis, and should help ease traffic congestion in Beijing, director of the Charges Management Department of the Municipal Development and Reform Commission Qi Jia said.

Beijingers buy more autos than residents of any other Chinese metropolis, according to the latest survey by a vehicle information consultancy. Figures of 155,936 vehicles registered in the city in the first six months of the year represent seven per cent of the national total.

This almost 160,000-increase brings the total number of registered vehicles in Beijing to over 2.7 million. The total is growing

by 15 percent annually in the capital, where authorities are exploring ways to ease the traffic congestion ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Expert comment

By Jiang Xubo

It is a breakthrough in the capital's public transportation reform. I have no doubt that the measures will help ease the city's traffic congestion, because the city's public transportation lines will surely see a further, larger round of reorganization. It also reduces the cost of transportation for low-income people in the city. Public transport will become cheaper and more convenient, which will encourage more people to use it.

Much still remains to be done, however. First, the gov-

ernment needs to invest more in infrastructure construction for the city's public transportation network. Beijing needs more main transport hubs and more designated bus lanes. Second, we need detailed regulations on who is to benefit from these measures and how that can be made to happen. Last, the new measures should change the way the city runs its public transportation system, so the public transport workers will also need to change the way they work and provide a better service.

It will take people some time to get used to the new measures, but I am sure as time goes on most Beijingers will happily accept them.

- Zhang Guowu, professor, Beijing Jiaotong University

Polluted Beijing raises clear-skies target

BEIJING (AFP) - Beijing authorities have set a target of 245 clear air days during 2007 as they step up their drive to improve the city's environment ahead of the 2008 Olympic Games, officials have announced.

One of the world's most polluted cities, Beijing enjoyed 241 so-called 'blue sky' days in 2006, exceeding its target of 238, the city's environmental watchdog said.

Further improving Beijing's air quality will be the city government's top priority in 2007, the Beijing environmental protection bureau said on its website.

The bureau classifies blue-sky days as days when air quality registers level two or better on an index that runs from level one, or excellent, to level five or hazardous to health.

Heavy industry, sandstorms from the Gobi desert and exhaust



The capital is working to achieve more clean air days for the Olympic Games. CFP Photo

fumes from the fast-rising number of cars contributed in 2006 to heavy pollution that forced the government to issue health warnings to residents in November and December last year.

In a report released in November, China's State Environmental Protection Administration said air pollution in China's cities was affecting the health of millions.

It said 11 major cities, includ-

ing the capital Beijing, were plagued by serious air pollution on more than one-third of the days in 2006, damaging the health of some 15 million people.

Last month, studies by the Asian Development Bank found that air pollution was killing more than half a million people in Asian cities every year and showed little sign of improving.

It cited Beijing as one of the worst cities along with the likes of Dhaka, Hanoi, Jakarta and New Delhi.

Expert comment

By Jiang Xubo

The 'blue sky' project needs to be positive and practical so we can find better ways to control pollution and improve the environment.

However, many serious cases of pollution stem from bad climate conditions and so are beyond

human control. We need to do more than just focus on how many 'blue sky days' there are, as one bad incident could be enough to ruin a city's environmentally-friendly image, even if they are scoring well on clean air days over the whole year. It may also be wrong to judge a city's general air quality by the worst few days, when the city suffers from serious pollution, but serious pollution on a few days is likely to cause severe damage.

We could set up an early warning system, so we can shut down some major polluters in the capital when disadvantageous weather conditions are forecast. This will help to reduce the risk of serious cases of pollution, especially smog.

- Wang Qiang, director, training center, China Meteorological Administration

Dogs in Beijing enjoy better lives as owners spend more on their pets

BEIJING (Channel News Asia) - In recent years, many Chinese have become ardent pet lovers.

A special section in one of Beijing's biggest parks has been set aside as a dog playground where canines can splash around in their own pool or do laps under the watchful eyes of owners.

Pet owners hope there will be more such places in the city for pets and their owners.

Zhang Jie, a dog owner, said, "Our dog is the happiest. He can eat, play and meet other dogs."

Chen Hongyun, another dog owner, said, "Unlike around our home where there are restrictions, it can play wherever it wants here."

Owners like 24-year-old executive Liu Liangyao are happy to give their dogs a taste of the good life at a special pet restaurant.

"I came and I fell in love with this place. I have finally found a place where my dog and I can have a good time. Most places in the city are only for people, dogs are barred. I think this is very unfair. Dogs are also living things, they should be treated equally," Liu said.

Judging by how he wolfs down his set meal, Han Dou, Liu's dog, definitely agrees.

A set meal costs more than US\$3 for small dogs and nearly US\$5 for the bigger breeds.

That is up to five times more than a cheap bowl of noodles for a person in Beijing.

Hou Zhihong, who manages the Cool Baby Pets Theme Restaurant, said, "We thought of this. It isn't comparable to noodles (for man) and it's harder to make."

Despite the cost, dog owners are more than willing to spend on their darlings.

Liu said, "I think he likes it - you saw the way he ate, right? It was almost shameful. I've ordered another set meal so he can have his fill as it's a rare opportunity for him to eat out."

Even when it comes to seeking medical help, the animals are rather spoiled for choice.

Beijing gearing up for 'Olympic weddings'

BEIJING (UPI) - The term "Olympic wedding" has become popular in China, referring to nuptials planned around the opening of the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.

China Radio International reported that despite the Olympics being more than a year away, some young couples are getting an early start on their preparations. Wedding companies have reported the most popular days being chosen by prospective newly-weds as August 6, 8 and 10 of 2008.

"The year 2008 will see the Beijing Olympics, which will be celebrated by the whole nation," one young person preparing for a 2008 wedding said. "It will be auspicious and happy to marry at that time. As many people will have similar plans, we have to be early birds making reservations with wedding companies and restaurants."

First market-based interbank rates launched

Beijing, January 4 (Dow Jones) – China has launched a new set of market-determined interest rates called Shanghai interbank offered rates (Shibor) Thursday, the People's Bank of China said.

The move is part of the government's efforts to 'further liberalize interest rates and cultivate a benchmark interest rate system for China's money market,' the PBOC said in a statement posted on its web site.

The rates, known as Shibor, are the latest attempt by Beijing to create benchmarks for China's rapidly growing debt market.

The Shibor has been on a trial run for more than a month.

The central bank currently uses one-year deposit and lending rates as the benchmark, but since adjustments are infrequent the rates fail to reflect market changes in a timely manner.

The central bank said Shibor

will include overnight, one and two-week, and one to 12 month tenors.

The rates will be the average of daily quotes for eight maturities of interbank rates provided by 16 commercial banks that are either primary dealers or market makers in the money market. The Shibor maturities will range from overnight to one year, the PBOC said.

The rates will be published at 3:30 GMT each day on an official web site, shibor.org.

It didn't disclose the names of the 16 banks, but said they have "relatively active yuan transactions and relatively adequate information disclosure."

Clear interest rate benchmarks are a prerequisite for China to develop more derivatives products, such as interest-rate swaps. Though a system of China interbank offered rates, or Chibor, was launched a decade ago, the market largely ignored it.

China plans auto export quotas

Beijing, January 3 (AFP) – China, which doubled its auto exports last year, plans to introduce a system of quotas to weed out local vehicle makers that are too small to be serious global contenders, state media has said.

China's auto industry exported a total of 340,000 units in 2006, an increase of 96 percent from 173,000 units the year before.

"China is aiming to lift the value of its vehicle and auto parts exports to 10 percent of the world's total vehicle trading volume in the next 10 years," said China's vice minister of commerce Wei Jianguo, according to Xinhua.

The ambitious goal compares with auto and auto part exports that currently account for just 0.7 percent of global trade in those product categories.

Despite the plan to boost auto exports, the government has decided to establish a system of export quotas for 2007.

This is to prevent domestic car makers getting into cut-throat competition and also to weed out small companies that cannot compete on a global level, Xinhua said.

Chinese autos are mainly sold to emerging markets in the Middle East, Latin America and Russia.

DaimlerChrysler to produce van locally

Shanghai, January 4 (Reuters) – Car maker DaimlerChrysler AG has received government approval to set up a joint venture to manufacture vans in China.

The company's Mercedes-Benz brand will form a venture with Fujian Auto industry Group and Taiwan's China Motor Corp in which the firms will invest more than 200 million euros.

The venture is expected to have an annual output of about 40,000 mid-sized and light cars.

The firms expect to start manufacturing DaimlerChrysler's Viano and Vito minivans and Sprinter transport vans by the end of 2008.

DaimlerChrysler already produces Mercedes-Benz cars and other models in China with Beijing Automotive Industry Holding.

Chrysler said last week it had signed a pioneering deal with China's Chery Automobile Co to produce a new small car for export.

BenQ-Siemens mobilephone files for bankruptcy



Lawyer Martin Prager of BenQ-Siemens addresses a press conference in Munich, Germany, Wednesday.

Prager announced he has been unable to find any new investors, so the company will close. As many as 3,000 employees will lose their jobs.

BenQ-Siemens applied for bankruptcy last September. Prager's announcement means the company has gone into legal proceedings.

BenQ purchased Siemens' mobile phone business in October 2005. BenQ was determined to catch up with Nokia, Motorola and Samsung in the world mobilephone market, but half a year later, admitted they have failed in the sector. BenQ-Siemens market share in the world mobilephone market had declined from 5.5 percent to less than three percent.

(Getty Images)

Fifth shoemaker joins suit

Beijing, January 3 (AFP) – A fifth Chinese shoemaker, Taiwan-invested Apache Footwear, has joined a lawsuit against the European Union over anti-dumping duties imposed on its products.

Late last month, four other Chinese companies including the Aokang Group, the biggest private

producer in the country, filed suits at the court.

The EU imposed a 16.5 percent anti-dumping tariff on imports of Chinese shoes with leather uppers beginning October 7.

In all, over 1,200 Chinese companies are affected, with most of the rest opting out of launch-

ing court action due to the high cost of litigation.

Chinese shoemakers and the government in Beijing said the measures did not conform with EU and WTO regulations.

European consumers vote with their feet, buying huge numbers of Chinese shoes.

Movie group wins piracy case

Beijing, January 3 (AP) – A Beijing court has ordered the popular Chinese web portal Sohu.com to pay US\$140,000 in damages for distributing Hollywood movies online without permission.

A subsidiary of Sohu.com Inc also must publish an acknowledgment of wrongdoing, the Motion Picture Association said.

Sohu spokeswoman Zhang Xin said the company was aware of the ruling but had no comment.

China is regarded as the world's leading source of illegally copied movies, software and other goods, despite repeated government promises to stamp out the underground industry.

The MPA blames piracy in China for costing US studios US\$244 million in lost box office revenues last year.

The group says five of the 10 movies cited in its lawsuit against Sohu were not released theatri-

cally in China.

According to the MPA, Sohu distributed *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, *S.W.A.T.* and other titles in 2004 and 2005 through a subscription download service on its web site.

In a statement, the MPA said it has 35 others lawsuits pending in Chinese courts alleging movie piracy.

RBS air lease tie-in to BoC

Beijing, January 3 (Telegraph) – Royal Bank of Scotland and Bank of China are likely to work together in the field of aircraft leasing.

RBS, which took a five percent stake in Bank of China in 2005, has identified aircraft leasing as a potential business.

RBS's aircraft leasing business, based in Ireland and Chicago, is one of the world's five largest and its fleet of planes is one of the newest.

ICBC to buy Indonesian Bank

Beijing, January 4 (AP) – The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, which had the largest-ever IPO in October, said it had agreed to acquire the small Bank Halim of Indonesia in its first such overseas purchase.

ICBC said it would buy 90 percent of Bank Halim, with an option to buy the remaining 10 percent from shareholders in three years. No value for the deal was given.

China Life Property's strategic partner

Beijing, January 3 (Dow Jones) – China Life Property & Casualty Insurance Co, which is owned by China Life Insurance Co and its parent, will introduce at least one strategic partner, the *Financial News* reported Tuesday.

The property insurer will complete its nationwide network in three to five years. The report didn't give further details on the strategic partner plan.

CITIC buys Kazakh oil field

Beijing, January 3 (AFP) – CITIC announced it had acquired the Kazakhstan oil assets of Canada's Nations Energy Co for US\$1.91 billion.

The agreement – one of the biggest overseas oil acquisitions made by China – allows CITIC to develop the Karazhanbas oil field in western Kazakhstan.

S Korea's surplus with China

Beijing, January 4 (Dow Jones) – South Korea's trade surplus with China reached US\$23.2 billion in 2006 and will likely reach a similar level this year, an official at South Korea's embassy in Beijing said.

The official said trade between both countries will likely rise about 20 percent to between US\$134 billion and US\$135 billion this year, from US\$112 billion in 2006.

US\$63.81 bln FDI expected

Beijing, January 3 (Reuters) – China expects to attract US\$63.81 billion foreign direct investment this year. This will be a four percent increase compared with 2006.

The commerce ministry said China's FDI in the first 11 months of 2006 stood at US\$54.26 billion, up 2.14 percent from a year earlier. That figure does not include foreign direct investments in the financial sector.

Project to preserve Old Shanghai's Jewish district

It began with a tourist visit to a Shanghai synagogue. Five years later, a Canadian artist and his partners are on the verge of a US\$1 billion project to preserve and develop the historic Jewish district of Old Shanghai.

The site was an area of approximately one square mile in the Hongkou District of Japanese-occupied Shanghai, where about 20,000 Jewish refugees lived during World War II, having fled from Nazi Germany, Austria, Poland and Lithuania. The refugees were settled in the poorest and most crowded area of the city. Local Jewish families and American Jewish charities aided them with shelter, food and clothing.

The project had its roots in 2001, when Ian Leventhal, a Toronto commercial artist best known for redesigning 150 outlets of the Second Cup coffee chain, took an ordinary tourist trip to China. One day at the historic synagogue in Shanghai, he met an elderly Chinese man who related his personal memories of the 25,000 Jews who had found shelter in the neighborhood in the 1930s and 1940s.

The stories captured his emotions, and Leventhal decided to organize a collection by Canadian artists as a gift to Shanghai. Leventhal later formed a partnership with Toronto designer Tom Rado, and together they made 17 trips to Shanghai to promote their vision, known as the Living Bridge project, which aims to guide a massive project to restore the neighborhood where Jews found refuge.

Crucial meetings with officials in Shanghai next month would give the final approval to the project, with the first phase aimed for completion by the time of Shanghai's World Expo in 2010.

(Globe and Mail.com)



Jews from around the world came to Shanghai to attend the exhibition of the 1930s Shanghai landers.

CFP Photos

Comments:

That would be great! After nearly five decades of ignoring its Jewish legacy, Shanghai is now waking up to this unique part of the city's history and looking at preserving aspects of the Tilanqiao area, which has been listed as one of the 12 key historical zones in the city.

— Simpson

To recreate the old Jewish neighborhood culture of Tilanqiao, authorities urgently need to get rid of the temporary shacks illegally put up by locals. They are ruining the original look of the community and obscuring those nice historical buildings

— Wang Weiqiang

This is a remarkable story. For those who want to visit the original settlement site before the

restoration takes place, there is a travel company in Toronto that does guided tours to Shanghai.

— Vickky Angstrom

Some of the old architecture in the area could be vacated to attract artists or writers. It would help in providing some cultural atmosphere, which is important for such historical zones.

— Jimmie Frank

It's going to be a true restoration — brick by brick and stain by stain. This district will become a national treasure. Your eyes sparkle when you see how you can bring it back to how it was. It's project heaven.

— Terry Archibald

Jews and Judaism in China have had a long and often enigmatic history. Jewish settlers

are documented in China as early as the 7th or 8th century, but may have arrived during the mid Han Dynasty. By the time of the establishment of the restoration, it might explore the history of Jews in China and help Chinese Jews rediscover their heritage.

— Simon Zhang

The renovation should be focused on the protection of historical sites rather than exploiting its commercial potential

— F. Perdue

This project is good news. The residents now live in difficult conditions. Up to 10 families are crowded into each house, with steep rickety staircases and a shortage of running water. It's very small and

crowded. It would be a humanitarian gesture to give the residents modern housing.

— Jo Geoghegan

The Shanghai project is also an object lesson in the risks of urban development in China. I learned that the project was once delayed by rising costs, and the growing complexity of relocating 15,000 residents from the area.

— Ku Ningshing

The renovation of Tilanqiao should introduce some high-end businesses to the area. The current rash of low-standard eateries and food stands not only affects the look of the streets, it also ruins the view of existing old buildings.

— Popeyez

(By Huang Daohen)



Gerti Brender, from Australia, shows a passport and photos from old Shanghai. Brender was a girl when she lived in Shanghai with her parents in the 1930s.



The street in Shanghai where Brender lived together with her parents.



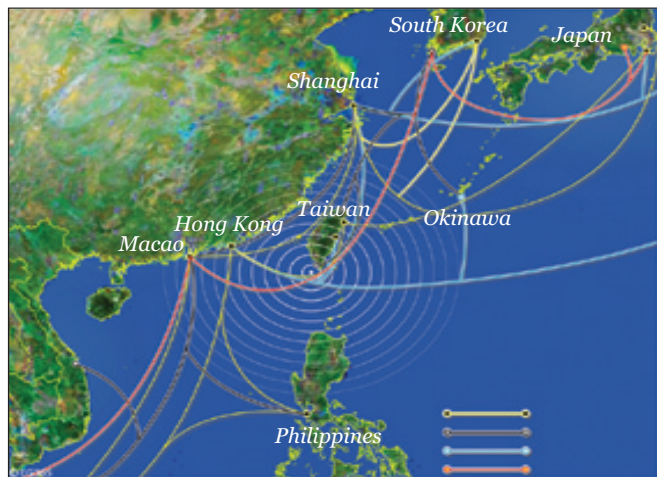
Brender's parents ran a boots shop in Shanghai.

Days without Internet show the world is not flat

Six major Internet cables under the Pacific Ocean were broken in an earthquake in southern sea off Taiwan on December 26. Internet connections in China, including the mainland and Hong Kong, were badly affected, and many were forced to live without the Internet for several days around the year-end.

Those with Internet censorship circumvention tools (proxies) already installed on their computers seem to be doing a little better, but for Hong Kong and mainland China, access was mostly limited to local sites. China's largest Internet portal website, Sina.com's blog site, made almost no mention of the earthquake or the blackout, and RSS feeds slowed to a trickle around lunch time that day. MSN and Yahoo have been affected as well, although QQ and GTalk are operating normally. Phone calls to other continents, some bloggers are saying, don't connect.

International telecommunications services are now partially



The earthquake to the south of Taiwan seriously disrupted Internet communications between East Asia and North America.

CFP Photo

restored after the earthquake. Most international calls are back to normal, while the undersea fiber-optic cables carrying Internet services are still being repaired. Major telecom providers have launched

emergency plans to repair the damage. China Netcom said two boats had already been sent to the area, with three others getting ready to help out with repair work.

(Damwei.org)

Comments:

How ironic! We (bloggers) have just been selected by the Times as the person of the year. We celebrate the fact that we live in an information age and enjoy convenient communication. However, we are so passive. We depend on cables under the sea, computers and electricity, but none of these are under our control.

— Duke Aka

I really hated it when the cables went down and it disrupted my life. As well as being cut off from Internet gaming, even my most hardworking and boring friends were complaining and had been trying to log in their MSN. I couldn't receive my clients' e-mail, and they couldn't receive mine. I had to shift to phone and fax, it was a lot of trouble — and expensive. I had to spend more time and effort to arrange weekend

gatherings with friends.

— Seany boy

Luckily, that day was the first working day between Christmas and New Year and many people were still on holiday. Companies and corporations that have to depend on the Internet would have had a difficult time. However, for ordinary netizens, this was a chance to force themselves to do some other interesting things.

— K. Smith

What does the crippling of the Internet show us? Hong Kong would be ruined by a single company telecoms monopoly. Let's count, how many foreign ISP (Internet Service Provider) companies we have in Hong Kong? Don't put all your eggs in one basket; this is the truth of fair competition.

— Former LAer

(By Huang Daohen)



Arches in Tuanjiehu Park are dusted white.

Photo by Huang Liang



Cleaners clear the muddy streets.

Photo by Wang Zhenglong



Beijingers play in the snow at Tuanjiehu Park.

Photo by Tian Yufeng

Having a 'snowball'

By Han Manman

Snowfall at the end of 2006 ushered in a happy 2007, citizens and soldiers mobilized in the streets with brooms and shovels, and families used the chance to enjoy some winter fun. *Beijing Today* sent five photographers to shoot the way Beijingers enjoy the season.



Beijing's first snowfall brought families outside for winter fun.

Photo by Jia Ting



The snowfall provided enough white for a few midget snowmen to be born around town.

Photo by Jia Ting



The police arm themselves with snowshovels to clean up Tian'anmen Square.

Photo by Li Feng



Residents scrape snow off their vehicles for the first time in 2007.

Photo by Tian Yufeng



A Beijinger plays with snow in great ecstasy by the 'Water Cube'.

Photo by Li Feng



Snow did little to deter winter swimmers.

Photo by Wang Zhenlong



Two faces of the Wall

By Wang Xiaoyuan

What would the Great Wall say if it were able to speak about its gradual transformation in the past century? Visitors may get a clue through the photography exhibition *The Great Wall Revisited: From the Jade Gate to Old Dragon's Head*.

Housed at the Capital Museum, the exhibition uses rephotography to present 72 pairs of photos of the wall shot as early as 1871 and as late as 2006. Rephotography means shooting pictures of the same subject at the same spot, from the same angle, in the same season and at the same time of the day.

Each pair shows an 'old' and 'new' picture, and visitors were astonished at the dramatic contrast, commenting on how much 'greater' the wall used to be.

There's a pair on a section of the wall in Laiyuan, Hebei Province. The old one, shot in the winter of 1937 by the Eighth Route Army photographer Sha Fei, shows three complete beacon towers; however, in its 2005 counterpart, only a half-bald ridge is left.

"We all know that the Great Wall is much different from how it was before, but using Rephotography is a way to give the viewer a stroke and trigger the reconsidera-



New photo shot in 2005 (above) to compare with the old one in 1937

Photos provided by International Friends of the Great Wall

tion of how to preserve the greatness of the Wall," said William Lindesay, exhibition organizer and photographer of the latter pictures. A native of Britain, he's also perhaps the best-known Great Wall researcher in town.

The idea of revisiting the wall was inspired by a serendipitous event: Lindesay saw a familiar Great Wall photo in a book published in 1909 by another William – William Edgar Geil. "I found one identical location in both our books, same remote place, same

direction, same angle, but with one major difference – a beacon tower in the center of Geil's old photo had completely disappeared by the time I got there 80 years later."

Lindesay began his mission in the spring of 2004. He walked across mountains and deserts in North China, with over 300 old pictures shot by other passionate photographers from around the world.

In his 1,200 lonely days on the wall, bad weather and precarious paths were not Lindesay's main headaches. "Scale has been

my most formidable challenge," he said. "I've been hunting for tiny places, usually lacking a place-name caption and, of course, without GPS co-ordinates. Sometimes the location was perfect, but the time was difficult to confirm, or suddenly there was a piece of cloud coming to cover the sun. What could you do then? Just wait for another day!"

Based in Beijing for the past 18 years, Lindesay, 49, founded the International Friends of the Great Wall.

Events

Penguin Classics

literary lunches

Journalist Eric Abrahamsen talks about *The Fight and Other Stories* by maverick critic William Hazlitt over a two-course lunch, coffee and a glass of wine.

Where: Bookworm, Building 4, Nan Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang

When: January 10, 12.30pm

Cost: Price to be confirmed

Tel: 6586 9507

Visit Erguotou liquor factory

Join CCC's half-day tour to the Beijing Erguotou Factory to see how this famous yet surprisingly inexpensive brand liquor is produced. You'll also see the entire traditional production process, including the distillation and fermentation in gigantic woks and their wine cellar containing old vintage bottles

Where: Meet at the Chinese Culture Club (Kent Center, No 29 Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Road, Chaoyang). Bus leaves at 10am.

When: January 11, 10am-12:30pm

Cost: 100 yuan, includes transportation and ticket

Phone: 6432 9341

Pet care information session

The International Center for Veterinary Services (ICVS) is holding a pet care information session in Shunyi to update owners on dog ownership regulations and registration requirements. With spring around the corner, ICVS will discuss key issues regarding purchasing puppies and kittens from local pet markets.

Where: The Open Gallery, No 5 Kaifa Jie, Xibaixin Village, Shunyi

When: January 8, 10am-12pm

Cost: Free

Tel: 8456 1939

An Inconvenient Truth:

A global warning

Former US Vice President Al Gore presents a compelling view of the future of our planet and our civilization.

Where: China Environment and Sustainable Development Reference and Research Center, No 1 Yuhui Nan Lu, Chaoyang

When: January 12, 4-6pm

Cost: Free

Tel: 8463 6353

(By He Jianwei)

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Digital city guide launches English version

By Chen Shasha

Digital Beijing, a computer that acts as an interactive city guide, recently came out with an English version.

There are more than 600 Digital Beijing terminals all over the city: 228 in Haidian, 179 in Chaoyang and some 200 in other districts. They may be found in hotels, subways, hospitals and along streets.

To activate the English version, simply click 'map' on the main page. 'I'm here' will then appear, showing a map of your location and establishments within a radius of 500-5,000 meters. The information you'll find includes Chinese- and Western-style restaurants, hotels, tourist spots, shopping malls, banks and embassies. If you click 'search', you will be shown the taxi route to your chosen destination. What's more, you can print out the information that you want to take with you.

Foreigners, however, don't find it convenient to use, probably owing to the fact that it wasn't developed by English speakers. "There's only one English word - map - on the front page, and I don't know what will happen when I click it," Derrick Sobodash from the US, said. He suggests putting 'Click here for English' to open the English version.

As for the printouts, since most cab drivers can't read Eng-

lish, the information's practically useless to them.

"Besides, when I move the map, it's too slow," Sobodash said. In addition, the English version doesn't provide bus routes; the developer probably believed that foreigners only took taxis to get around town. Sobodash hopes that the bus information will eventually be included. "Otherwise, it's not going to be as convenient as the Baidu map."

This is only the start; Digital Beijing's English version is still being improved, said Liu Xiu of Wan Wei Capital telecommunications, person-in-charge of the project. In the coming months, her group will be asking for suggestions from foreign experts to make the system fully functional by the 2008 Olympics.

Central areas where Digital Beijing may be found:

- ◇ East gate of Asian Hotel, Dongcheng
- ◇ First floor of International Hotel, Dongcheng
- ◇ West gate of the Capital theatre, Dongcheng
- ◇ Dongzhimen, Dong-sishitiao, Andingmen and Xuanwumen subway stations
- ◇ Sogo shopping mall, Xuanwu
- ◇ Lufthansa Friendship Shopping City, Chaoyang
- ◇ Sanlitun Yashow Clothing Market, Chaoyang



A Beijing expat uses the city guide.

Photo by Chen Shasha

ASK Beijing Today

A friend who was recently touring Beijing with her parents got into a fight with a cab driver because he tried to overcharge her. In the end, she was held overnight at the police station and pay 1,000 yuan to the driver because he reported that she kicked him. What can you suggest to avoid getting into this kind of trouble?

Beijing Today suggests that foreigners, especially people who are new in town, stay clear of fights. If you encounter a problem with a cab driver, the best thing to do would be to keep the receipt and call the taxi company. Based on your complaint, you should be able to get your money back, and the driver should be fined.

Do you know when tickets to the Olympic Games will be available to the public?

According to the Games' Beijing Organizing Committee, tickets will go on sale beginning the first half of this year. For up-to-date information, please visit en.beijing2008.cn.

Can I easily buy contact lenses in Beijing?

There are optical shops that sell contact lenses in practically every corner of the city. They have well-known international brands, as well as local brands, which can be used from one day to six months to a year. However, the lenses manufactured in China seem smaller than those commonly found in other countries, plus extended wear lenses are difficult to find. It's better to bring a few pairs as backup in case you don't find the ones you need.

Is abortion legal in China? Which hospitals in Beijing can perform abortions?

Yes, abortion is legal and quite a common practice in China. All licensed hospitals with a department of gynecology and obstetrics can perform abortions.

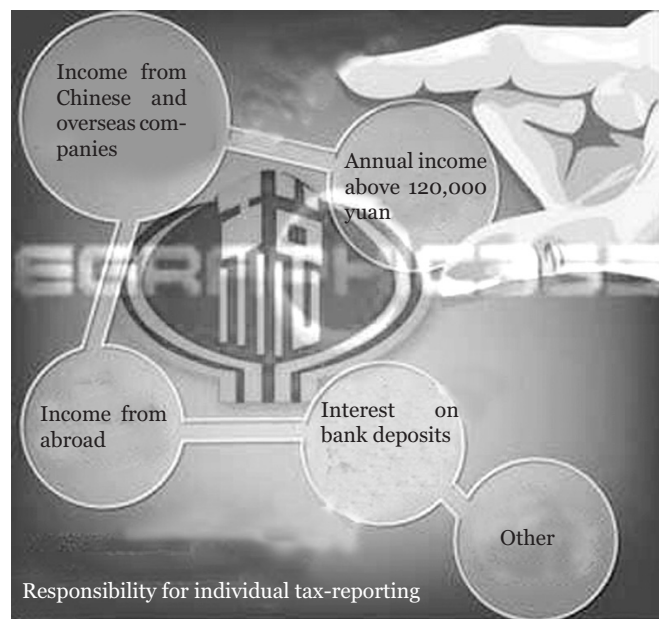
My friend suggested that I try acupuncture for my back pain. Is it safe to reuse acupuncture needles?

As far as we know, acupuncture clinics do not recommend reusing acupuncture needles; they are used once, then discarded. A box of 100 needles costs around 15 yuan. The price varies slightly depending on the manufacturer. Acupuncture for back pain needs around 30 needles per treatment.

Email your questions to weiyi@ynet.com

(By Wei Ying)

The liability of earning big bucks



By Gan Tian

If you earn more than 120,000 yuan (US\$15,000) annually, you should report your income to the tax authorities beginning January 1 this year. This is the first time the China State Administration of Taxation is requiring high-income employees to report their earnings.

Are you one of them? Be sure you know the new rules.

The taxation administration's website says the following people, both local and foreign, who are working in China should report their earnings: people with an annual income of more than 120,000 yuan, with income from

more than one organization, with income from overseas, whose employer does not pay tax or as stipulated by the State Council.

Here's an example the site provides: Jeremy comes from the US and is assigned by US-based Company P to be the manager of its China branch - Company S - from June 1, 2006 to June 1, 2014. During these eight years, he stays put in Beijing, except for a two-month business trip to the US in 2012, and earns:

A) 20,000 yuan a month from China Company S;

B) 200,000 yuan bonus every year from US Company P;

C) 100,000 yuan from the US apartment that he's renting out;

D) 10,000 yuan interest from his US dollars deposited in China banks

How should Jeremy report his income?

First, Jeremy should pay tax only for A, B and D once he gets the money, as it is the money he has earned in China; he should pay tax for Item C only in 2013, as regulations say that foreigners who live up to one year after living in China continually for five years should pay this kind of tax.

Second, let's see how Jeremy should report his income at the end of each year. Though he would have earned more than 120,000 yuan in the years 2006, 2012 and 2014, but not lived a full year in China those years, he need not report these three years.

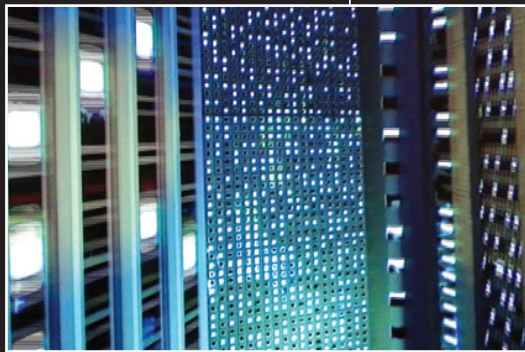
Between 2007 and 2011, he would have lived five full years in China and earned an annual income above 120,000 yuan. This time, he should make a report to the tax authorities within three months after the end of each year.

In 2013, Jeremy would have lived a full year in China and earned over 120,000 yuan, so he should also make a report. In addition, because he has lived in China five full years (2007-2011) and more than 90 days in 2012, when he reports his income of 2013, he should also count in Item C.

Complicated, isn't it? However, this is something you should understand and remember. If you fall within this category and fail to report your earnings within the prescribed period, you can face a fine of up to 10,000 yuan (US\$1,250). If you file a false report, you can be fined up to 50,000 yuan (US\$6,350).

Timeless Space

Wear light



The Missed Tense



Beyond the Frame

By Jiang Xubo

Lin Jiunting's exhibition *Timeless Space*, a world created by the artist through digital technology, looks like a dreamland that never ends.

The Missed Tense, a video installation, tells you how sweet, innocent or distressful our dreams can be. At the entrance to the exhibition room stands a big box with a red lantern. Every time you light the lantern, you find your way to another corner of dreamland; lakes in your dreams ripple as if stirred by a fragment of memory. And can you believe that you may even encounter what you were in your past life, in an ancient town shrouded in thick fog? It could be another guy, a woman, a kid or an old man. How would you feel meeting that person, also with a lantern in hand? Remember all those nightmares, in which you fell down from a great height? In case you've forgotten, get ready to feel the dizziness again in Lin's space of dreams.

When you light the lantern for the third time and walk into the space, you'll find yourself in a dense forest covered in thin mist. Groping your way forward into the shadowy depths of the forest under the lantern's flare, you'll find endless surprises. Did you catch the glimpse of a beast, flashing by behind the trees? Hush and go forward, but don't forget your lantern, you might see it again later if you're lucky. Finally you get a clear view: it's a unicorn, disappearing into the forest! Isn't it amazing to meet a dear old friend of your childhood dreams again after so many years?

What's more exciting, the artist's magic wand doesn't stop waving here. Its magic even applies to traditional Chinese painting. In *Beyond the Frame*, digital technology literally brings Chinese ink painting out of the frame and makes endless scrolls of all those paintings of chrysanthemum, bamboo forest, orchid and plum.

This group of works consists of two parts: the screens on the wall and separate touch screens installed in front of them. The paintings on the wall never cease to change as long as you keep your fingers on the touch screen. When you twang the strings of the koto musical instrument on the screen, bamboo branches in the painting's foreground fade away and young branches grow slowly. Staring at the ceaselessly stretching forest, you just can't stop wondering if you're walking into the bamboo forest, with a butterfly guiding you as soothing music plays.

Lin has still more to offer. Do the butterflies dancing around *The Psyche Zone* remind you of your sweet and innocent childhood? Be careful, however, not to catch the butterfly, otherwise, it will escape with all the joy you feel.

Stepping into Lin's space is like a dream come true. You'll experience the pleasure, distress and sense of uncertainty, which you encounter in your dreams, but be prepared for the feelings that may surface when you step out of the fairyland; you know quite well you can't stay there forever, but be cheerful. The artist has promised to keep creating dreams for our waking moments.

"I just want to create a space that everybody wants to enter, but can't. It's a space everybody has in their heart, but fails to materialize because of the pressures of daily life. It may be tantalizing, but that's why I will keep creating spaces like this for people."

The artist says:

I've always been fascinated with the theme of time. In my mind, time is nonlinear, thus you can jump into any other space and time. For example, you may sometimes feel you're somewhere in the future, yet you still find yourself right here and right now when you wake up. I feel that way all the time – that's why I'm always trying to explore this state of mind.

I just want to create a space that everybody wants to enter, but can't. It's a space everybody has in their heart, but fails to materialize because of the pressures of daily life. It may be tantalizing, but that's why I will keep creating spaces like this for people.

My works might share many things with computer games. What new media artists concentrate on, however, is not technology, but the inspiration. In short, my work presents a space that usually exists in computer games, but in a more artistic way.

What I'm doing is basically the same as painting or any other artistic creation, but the brush I use is digital technology, which is more difficult to work with. That's the only thing that makes it different.

New media artists are more like movie directors, I think. They get the play and the inspiration and they are in charge of the presentation, but it's impossible for directors to do it all, the filming, the make-up and the performance. They have to work with other people including technicians, to get the work done. I have a team of 12 people in my studio. I train them and work with them to create my works.

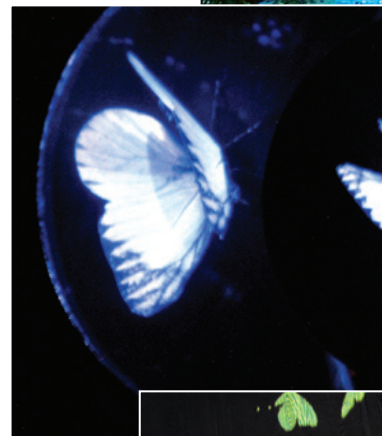
– Lin Jiunting, art director, Taipei-based Blue Phoenix art studio



The Missed Tense

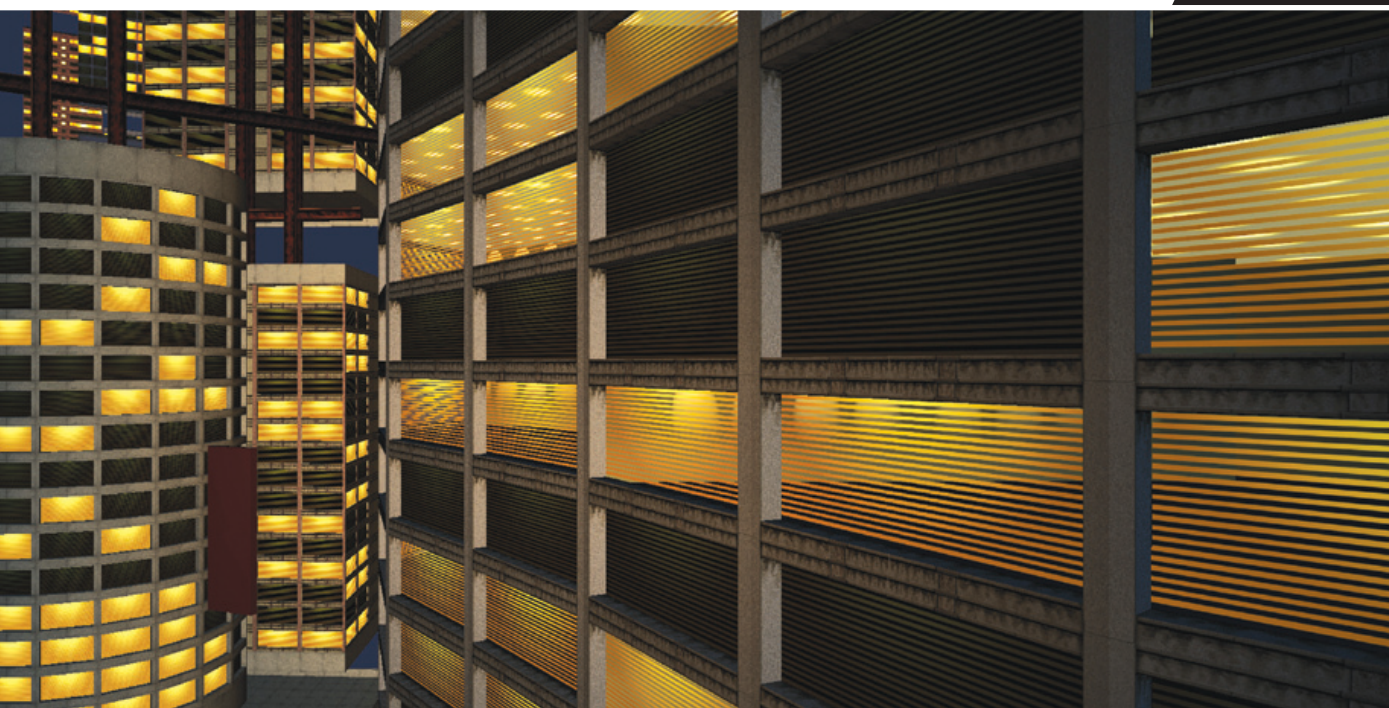


The Mi



Psyche Zone

e: aving dreams with t and shadows



ssed Tense



Critics say:

An important point here is that electronic media art, especially interactive video installations, tends to be bogged down with heavy, complex high-tech vocabulary – sometimes with a thick aura of cultural arrogance – that intimidates the casual participant when exhibited as an interactive public installation.

Lin Jiunting's work, however, steers clear from this trap with succinct and masterful use of time and visual vocabulary. By carefully and precisely putting together different elements of computer technology, he draws the audience into his world of virtual reality.

To this end, Lin's ability has garnered him acclaim and approval among his fellow Taiwanese electronic media art contemporaries. Still, it's clear that one of Lin's most prominent abilities is his capability to strike a balance between the elastic space of computer games and the pure, powerful depth of computer video art.

While some video art is composed with the intention to show off, entertain or visually excite, Lin's work uses the technology moving beyond the fray, letting his work take on a more revolting and segmental quality. Perhaps this road of expression that Lin is currently paving is one that's worth reflecting upon.

– **Zheng Naiming, critic**

Lin Jiunting's latest installations work with some of the most powerful archetypes of Chinese tradition: the butterfly of

Zhuangzi's dream, the bamboo forest and the mountains and rocks of traditional ink painting, and he even combines that with the notion of memory, of the possibility to freely cross the boundary between reality and dream.

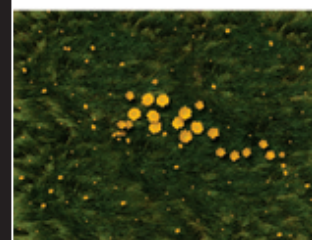
There are two things that spring to mind. First, the search for lightness. This lightness is not just a question of the medium, but also the ease with which the viewers engage in Lin's installations. It's not just the dissolution of the heavy medium ink into pure light, it's also the effortlessness of the interaction that stands at the heart of Lin's installation; and it is this quality that makes him 'go beyond the painting.' In other words, to make him recover an essential quality of traditional Chinese literati brush as a medium in an elegant and erudite social gathering: painting as a way to create a world of poetry, detached from the ashes of everyday life. Yet again, it's the effortlessness and



lightness of the new medium that make him carry the archetype of the entry into a detached paradisiacal plum blossom garden one step further. While in ancient mythology this garden has to be reached through a long journey, or while in traditional painting it takes the magic of Daoism to diminish yourself such as to physically jump into the painting and wander in there maybe even for year, Lin gives this magical journey a new twist – with the lightness and effortlessness of the touch of a fingertip, the gaze is drawn into the painting, and the painting starts to move.

On the other hand, Lin reminds us also how fragile this illusion is: with the very same touch of the finger the illusion of the butterfly can be destroyed – it might take almost nothing to start that journey into the plum blossom land, but that land of beauty can also be destroyed simply by the desire to touch it, to take hold of it, to possess it.

– **Felix Schober, critic**



Beyond the Frame

About the Exhibition Timeless Space

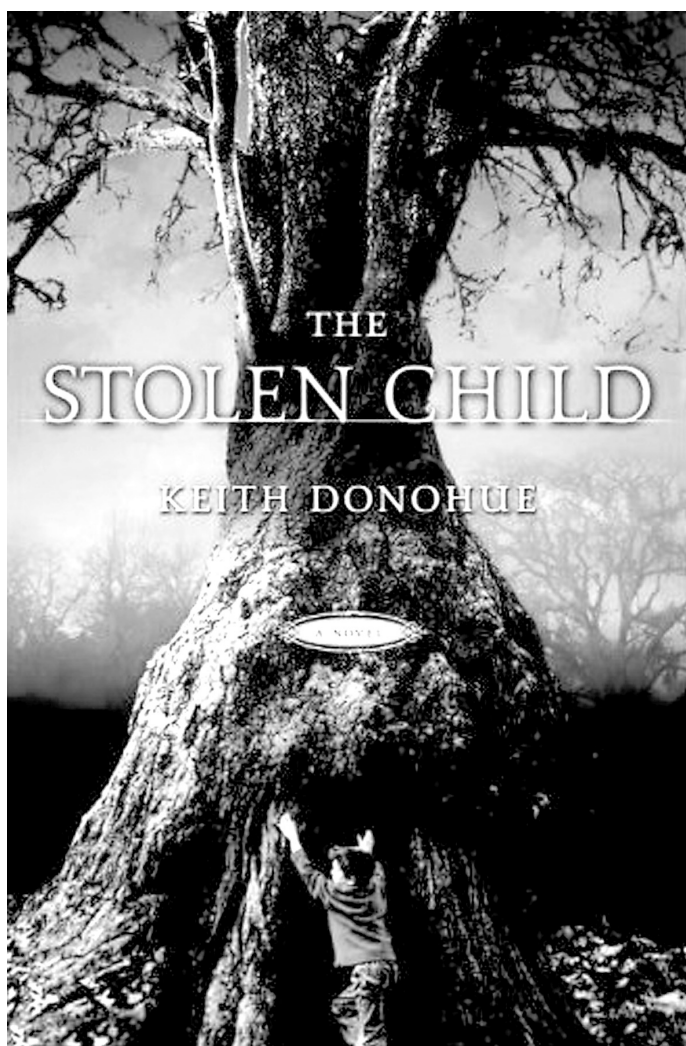
Where: Dimension Art Center, No 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang

When: Tue-Sun 11am-7pm, until March 4

Admission: Free
Tel: 6435 9665

Photos provided
by Dimension Art Center

The Stolen Child



By Keith Donohue

336pp, Nan A. Talese, US\$14.37 (Amazon.com)

Inspired by *The Stolen Child*, William Butlet Yeats's 1886 poem, Keith Donohue's first work follows the lives of a stolen boy and the changeling fairy who replaces him.

Henry Day, age seven, runs away from home in his 1950s American Podunk town and hides in the forest in a hollowed out tree. His choice proves a bad one when he's kidnapped by a band of ageless changelings. The oldest takes Henry's shape and resumes his life on the outside, and leaves Henry to be wrapped in vine and cobweb and hurled into a river in a bizarre 'baptism' that finds him reborn the changeling "Aniday." As Aniday, Henry must live out his days among the changelings, waiting for his turn to become the eldest and take the place of another unhappy or isolated child.

While a fairy tale would end here, for Donohue this is only the beginning. In buildingsroman style, Donohue follows the life of 'Henry', both new and old, 20 years on as each struggles with his new surroundings.

New 'Henry' carries scattered memories of his human days before becoming a changeling, and a sudden proficiency with piano leads his family to suspect something is deeply changed in their son. 'Henry', not being human, has to remember to grow – a process described in too much detail. His new existence brings him guilt as he remembers how his own childhood was stolen.

Meanwhile, Aniday finds his memories of human life fading quickly amongst his new family. But the group's occasional encounters with humans prevent him from completely letting go of his lost life, and he jots down occasional notes to himself. Notes like "Find Henry Day," "Ruined my life."

But despite the troubles, each claims to find his new life far better than the old. 'Henry' grows up to become a master pianist with a wonderful wife, and Aniday ambles about the forest with his brother and sister changelings. But deep inside, each is numb, gloomy and trapped within a false identity.

For Donahue, the boys are a vehicle for exploring the human need for identity and acceptance in this decidedly adult fairy tale.

What is *The Stolen Child* experience like?

Keith Donohue manages something like an eyes-open return to childhood in his magical and powerful debut novel, *The Stolen Child*. It is an unsettling and gorgeously written tale of two boys who are forced out of their childhoods too early. Their struggles to return will rend your heart.

– **Marta Salij, *Detroit Free Press***

What struggles do the adult Henries go through?

Both Henry and Aniday seek a deeper meaning to their uncommon lives: Henry through his music and Aniday through the preservation of his memories in writing. Neither finds fulfillment or peace on his own, for they are two souls tied together in ways neither can truly fathom. Neither can begin to under-

stand who he really is without coming to terms with who he used to be. Fate decrees that their worlds intersect on several occasions, as each one's search for his own identity seems to lead him closer and closer to the other. There are tragedies and triumphs along the way, and I must say I found the tragedies surprisingly powerful and emotional. You read this novel with your heart as much as your mind.

– **Daniel Jolley, *Rambles Magazine***

What themes does the book explore?

The Stolen Child is a haunting piece of fiction – simple and uncluttered but strong in sense and spirit. Though presented as an alternate adult fairy tale, its themes resonate strongly in people in search of their identity and their life's mission, to wit, young people

who still drift aimlessly between childhood and adulthood. Keith Donohue writes of a longing for acceptance in *The Stolen Child*; by his impressive entry into literary fiction, he has rightfully gained ours.

– **BusinessWorld**

Frequently changing viewpoints in a story often hampers readers from identifying with a character. Is this a problem in *Stolen Child*?

Donohue truly immerses you in the very different yet parallel worlds of Henry and Aniday, and you can't help but feel a close affinity to them both, particularly the latter. You might think the constant switching of viewpoint and narration between the two protagonists would prove clumsy or disorienting, but this is not the case at all. Indeed, the narrative of one constantly reinforces the other,

especially when you get two divergent viewpoints of the same event.

– **Jolley**

Are there any negative comments about the book?

Such choice, felicitous phrases – a thick May fog "settled into the woods and clung to the darkness like the skin of a peach" – go some way to relieve the perpetual depressive sag of Donohue's prose. A Washington archivist and former speechwriter, his first novel is remarkably accomplished, if peculiarly miserable ... *The Stolen Child* is literary fantasy in an existentialist vein, an alienated vision of life as decay, bereft of meaning or hope. "A bedtime story for adults," Cape reckons. Fair enough, if your idea of comfort reading is Albert Camus.

– **Colin Greenland,**

The Guardian
(By Derrick Sobodash)

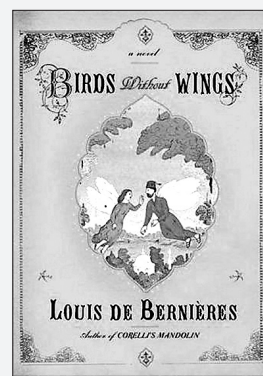
Local shelf

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn

By Betty Smith

496 pp, Perennial Classics, 120 yuan

Francie Nolan, avid reader, penny-candy connoisseur, and adroit observer of human nature, has much to ponder in colorful, turn-of-the-century Brooklyn. She grows up with a sweet, tragic father, a severely realistic mother, and an aunt who gives her love too freely – to men, and to a brother who will always be the favored child. Francie learns early the meaning of hunger and the value of a penny. She is her father's child – romantic and hungry for beauty. But she is her mother's child, too – deeply practical and in constant need of truth. Like the Tree of Heaven that grows out of cement or through cellar gratings, resourceful Francie struggles against all odds to survive and thrive.



Birds Without Wings

By Louis De Bernieres

576 pp, Knopf, 120 yuan

"Destiny caresses the few, but molests the many," a proverb-prone narrator reflects as he begins the story of Eskibah, a small town in Anatolia, and of its inhabitants' fate in the turmoil of the early 20th century. After generations of cheerful intermingling, the town's Muslim Turks, Christian Greeks, and Armenians are divided by the First World War and then by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. De Bernieres gamely tries to illustrate the human cost – a complex series of migrations and persecutions – through a cast of endearing, folksy characters. He interleaves the narratives with the biography of Kemal Atatuk.

Available:

Beijing Bookworm

Where: Building 4, Nan Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang

Tel: 6586 9507

Eaters of the Dead

By Michael Crichton

288 pp, Ballantine Books, 60 yuan

In AD 922 Ibn Fadlan, the representative of the ruler of Bagdad, City of Peace, crosses the Caspian Sea and journeys up the valley of the Volga on a mission to the King of Saqaliba. Before he arrives, he meets with Buliwyf, a powerful Viking chieftain who is summoned by his besieged relatives to the North. Buliwyf must return to Scandanavia and save his countrymen and families from the monsters of the mist ...

Available:

Foreign Languages Bookstore

Where: 235 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng

Tel: 6512 6903

(By Han Manman)

By Chu Meng

In 1954, the former Soviet Union built the Moscow Exhibition Center complex, including the Moscow Restaurant in Beijing, to display the "economic and cultural achievements of the Soviet Union." After the exhibition,

Moscow Restaurant opened to the public. Because of its different architecture and cuisine, Moscow Restaurant quickly earned a good reputation around Beijing. Recently, more and more new Russian restaurants compete to attract Beijing citizens' appetites for exotic food.



You can find many kinds of Vodkas at The Elephant

Photos provided by The Elephant

Welcome the 'Russian Year of China' with a feast

Remember the good old days

By Gan Tian

Is there an unwritten rule that all Russian restaurants must be difficult to find?

The main hall of Kiev Restaurant is underground, making it look quite ordinary. Once you enter it, though, you'll see why it's special.

There are shows at around 6pm, and all the performers' photos are hanging on the wall, which will make you remember 'the good old days.'

Of course, the simple decorations also help. I noticed that nearly all the customers were 50 years old and up. Yes, a pretty good place to be nostalgic.

Red Soup, as its name suggests, makes the bowl red and dense. The color is good, but not the taste – a little sour. Maybe you'll like it, but that's certainly not my cup of tea.

Cold Toast Fish has fresh meat and bread. Strange, isn't it? And they are toasted together. When you put it in your mouth, hot and cold burst into your mouth together, yummy!

Some students majoring in Russian often come here for a gathering, as it's near the Beijing Foreign Studies University.

However, some people go there to reminisce...

Kiev Restaurant

Where: No 13 Puhuanli, Yuyuantan Nan Lu, Haidian
Open: 9am-midnight
Tel: 6828 3482; 6827 7309
Cost: 110 yuan per person

Grand flavor of Russia

By Chu Meng

Located in Beijing's historical Russian district, The Elephant offers Russian hospitality and culinary excellence.

Opened by Ali and Homeyra Darugar, the restaurant has an atmosphere of aristocratic dining – the feeling you're enjoying a meal at your beloved grandmother's table.

The dining room is spacious with tables lining the walls. The lighting is low and walls are decorated with large paintings of Russian scenes. On Friday and Saturday, you'll be entertained by strolling musicians playing violin and strumming guitar.

The owners have put efforts into the culinary details, from the seemingly endless variety of tangy cream sauces to the use of such herbs as tarragon and dill. The



Don't worry about the food.

Russians had brought in many French chefs, hence the French culinary influence.

Many of the menu selections are actually prepared at your table, including the Nicholcia Flambé, a buttery-soft filet mignon prepared tableside using

a small gas burner. The waiter sears the pepper-encrusted filet in a cast-iron pan, then finishes it off with a sauce, which is ignited with a splash of brandy. This entrée is accompanied by broccoli and marinated beets and scalloped potatoes. Even the desserts are flambéed.

There are 20 meat and poultry selections, including the well-known Beef Stroganoff, made of sliced beef tenderloin and mushroom in a creamy sauce; Kulebiaka Po-Baranina, made of puff pastry with lamb, vegetable, tarragon sauce and Kotleto Po-Kievski; and Chicken Kiev, made of baked breast of chicken stuffed with butter tarragon sauce.

The wine list is extensive, so is the list of favored vodkas. Flavors for the latter range from rasp-

berry, apricot, citrus, black currant to butterscotch or chocolate.

For dessert, The Elephant offers classic choices such as cream caramel that is not too rich or eggy. There's also chocolate mousse. If you like cake, white chocolate mousse cake with raspberry sauce and chocolate mocha is your match.

The Elephant

Branch one: B1/F Hua Sheng Plaza at Yabolu Market area, Chaoyang

Open: 12pm-2am
Tel: 5120 6758

Cost: 100 yuan per person
Branch two: No 93 Toutiao,

Chaoyangmen Wai (north to the Ya Tai Plaza at Yabolu Market area), Chaoyang

Open: 12pm-2am
Tel: 8561 4073

Cost: 100 yuan per person

Come on and build your body

By Gan Tian

Traktirr, which means "little pub" in Russian, is really difficult to find. "We don't want to put a sign on the door as everybody already knows it," Chen Tiexin, the restaurant owner, explains.

Founded in 1994 at Yabolu, Traktirr has been around for more than 10 years. Requested by the Russian Embassy officials, it moved to Dongzhimen Nei Dajie in 2001. The restaurant mainly serves Russian family dishes.

Chen recommended a whole set of special Russian dishes for us, starting with the cold dish Red Caviar on a Baguette (12 yuan).

This was followed by Borsch



Mushroom & meat rolls



Inside decor of Traktirr

Photos provided by Traktirr

(12 yuan), mixed with beef and some vegetables, a dish Russians are proud of.

A salad is a must. Capital Salad (14 yuan) has ox tongue, which makes the taste very strange, but worth a try. The main dish was Chicken Kiev (30 yuan), chicken meat rolled in butter and vegetables – very nutritious. The food's name comes from Kiev, the capital of Ukraine.

The most recommended dessert was Crepes with Apples (14 yuan). Ever imagined apple fried with sugar and butter? Yes, you can use your imagination when you try this dish. "Europeans love this thing," Chen said.

Of all the discoveries in the restaurant, I found Chen the most interesting. He is good-looking, elegant, and carefully explained everything to me.

"If you are working out, Russian dishes are very suitable, as they contain less salt and more beef," Chen said.

After we reached that conclusion, we decided to encourage each other's body-building career.

Traktirr

Where: 1 Section A, Xiyangguan Hutong, Beizhongjie, Dongzhimen Nei Dajie, Dongcheng

Open: 9am-midnight
Tel: 6403 1896

Cost: 50 yuan per person

Choose a gift

Spend over 800 yuan at the Esprit counter in Modern Plaza (No 130 Haidian Lu, Haidian) and choose a gift worth 300 yuan until January 11. For details, call 6257 6688.



Free scarf

Spend over 3,680 yuan at the Tombog counter in Chen Xi Bai Huo (No 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) and get a free scarf worth 880 yuan. For details, call 6505 6118.



A fifth off clothes

All Benetton clothes at Chen Xi Bai Huo (No 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) are 20 percent off until January 5. For details, call 6505 6118.



Shop at 10-50 percent off

Selected Adidas products at Zhongguancun Plaza (Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian) are 10-50 percent off until January 7. For details, call 5986 3343.



Dine at 10 percent off

Dine at Wu Shan grilled fish restaurant (No 59 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang) and get 10 percent off the standard price until January 9. For reservations, call 6461 5726.



Free beer

Dine at Xiao Ku Fan Qie hot pot restaurant (No 248 Luotuowan Lu, Sanluju) and get beer free until January 10. For reservations, call 6439 7030.



Free entrance and cocktails

Come to Club Suzie Wong (West gate of Chao Yang Park, Chaoyang) and enjoy three free cocktails until January 31. For details, call 6593 6049.



Shopping at half-price

Shop at Pacific Jun Tai Plaza (No 133 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) and pay only half the original price until January 10. For details, call 6612 6888.



New Year sale

To celebrate the New Year, selected items at Zhong You shopping center (No 176 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) are 52 percent off the regular price. For details, call 6601 8899.



Yoga club discount

One-year membership cards at Chang Zhou Yoga Club (No 24 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) are 12 percent off until January 10. For details, call 6515 6272.



Free salon membership

Visit Butterfly Beauty Parlor (No 93 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang) and get a free membership card for the salon. For details, call 5820 8579.



Gems 15 percent off

All jewelry at Xie Rui Lin in Chen Xi Bai Huo (No 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) is 15 percent off until January 5. For details, call 6505 6118.



Shop at 30 percent off

Most items at Ganjiakou shopping center (No 17 Sanlihe Lu, Xicheng) are 30 percent off until January 9. For details, call 8839 2479.



Shop at 20-50 percent off

Selected goods at An Zhen Hua Lian shopping center (Beisanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang) are 20-50 percent off until January 7. For detail, call 6443 6880.



Sporting goods 100 yuan off

Spend over 298 yuan on Nike, Rebo, Puma and Kappa at Sport City (Zhongguancun Plaza, Haidian) and get 100 yuan off until January 7. For details, call 5986 3387.



Clothing 30-50 percent off

Tant Pour Elle clothes at Modern Plaza (No 130 Haidianlu, Haidian) are 30-50 percent off until January 7. For details, call 6257 6688.



Shop at 62 percent off

Selected goods at Di'anmen shopping center (No 31 Di'anmen Wai Dajie, Xicheng) are 62 percent off until January 7. For details, call 6404 1336.



Shopping at half-price

Selected Ting Mei products are for sale at half-price until January 10. For details, call 8826 0440 ext 8030.



(By Terrence Lu)

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Hanfu: being the visual voice of tradition

By He Jianwei

Kimono is the Japanese traditional costume. Hanbok is the Korean traditional costume. The Tang suit is often considered the Chinese traditional costume, but the Han nationality of ancient times wore

something much, much different: *hanfu*, or Han Costume.

In China, a group of 50,000 people, based on BBS statistics, are attempting to revive hanfu. In this issue, *Beijing Today* will cover what they're doing and how they're going about it.



Photo provided Fang Fang

Fang Fang, 25, is an editor of a Tianjin fashion magazine. She has organized four activities since 2004.

Q: When did you begin wearing hanfu? Why do you like it?

A: I learned about *hanfu* online some time in September 2003. I thought it had disappeared from real life before I saw people wearing it in daily life. *Hanfu* has a certain 'ethereal' beauty, so I fell in love with it in my childhood. It's pretty easy to DIY your own *hanfu*.

Q: What kinds of activities have you organized?

A: I've organized four national events in Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin. More than 30 people were involved in the activities. We had the first competition of knowing *hanfu* in Beijing in October 2005. Many netizens from other provinces and cities attended the competition to share knowledge about costume and culture.

Q: What kind of people usually join your group?

A: The people who wear *hanfu* are usually ages 18 - 30. I think people who wear it are part of a "New Traditionalism" movement, because after getting a modern, often high education, they've returned to probe the origins of their own culture.



Photo provided by Li Manqi

Li Manqi, 27, is a HR manager.

Q: When did you begin wearing hanfu? Why do you like it?

A: My first time was in June 2006. The first time I looked in the mirror, I felt like a fairy. We have 56 nationalities and 55 of them have their own costumes. Why didn't the Han?

Q: Did people understand why you wore hanfu? How did you handle their reactions?

A: I've been fortunate in that my friends and colleagues respect my choice, and they are more interested in *hanfu*. The costume is like a seed to plant people's hearts. When nourished with culture, it can grow into something beautiful.

Q: How has hanfu influenced your character and life?

A: The biggest change is I care more about our history and country. I've cherished life and started to really listen to other people's views. In September 2006, my husband and I wore *hanfu* when we went to party in a bar. We got a giggle when we heard others thought we were matchmakers.



Photo provided by Feng Maofang

Feng Maofang, 26, works in marketing. She designs *hanfu* and organizes related activities in her spare time.

Q: When did you begin wearing hanfu? Why do you like it?

A: I started to wear *hanfu* in August last year. When I was seven or eight, I remember watching the clothing in period pieces. I loved the costumes very much. Back then, I didn't know it was called *hanfu*, but I still hoped I could dress like that one day. Whenever I wear *hanfu*, I feel like it's representative of our culture.

Q: When did you begin to design hanfu?

A: In September last year, I began designing *hanfu* by myself. The first costume I designed was made of cotton, which I had intended to use for curtain.

Q: How has hanfu influenced your character and life?

A: I appreciate our history and culture more. I've paid more attention to my words and deeds under the principles of Chinese traditional ethics. China has a unique etiquette developed through its history. The young generation should inherit it and traditional moral standards.

Q: Did people understand why you wore hanfu? How did you handle their reactions?

A: In the beginning, most people didn't understand why I was dressing this way. Some people thought I was wearing a kimono or hanbok. I explained patiently again and again that it was *hanfu*. Many of my colleagues and friends have taken to *hanfu* since my introduction.

Q: What kinds of activities have you organized?

A: I've organized and participated in a sacrifice to Confucius in October 2006. We get together to celebrate Chinese traditional festivals. For example, we made dumplings on the winter solstice last year.

Q: How do you find more people to join your group?

A: We usually connect with each other through the Internet. Most people are students, young white collar workers and scholars. I think the people who know Chinese history well have an easier time accepting *hanfu*.



Photo provided by Wang Yuliang

Wang Yuliang, 23, is a designer of *hanfu* living in Australia.

Q: When did you begin wearing hanfu? Why do you like it?

A: The first costume I designed was in 2003. I've loved *hanfu* since I was a child: it's our traditional costume, so of course I should love it! But to be more objective, *hanfu* represents the philosophy of the cosmos not only in its design, but also in its patterns.

Q: How has hanfu influenced your character and life?

A: The design of *hanfu* makes me feel more quiet and calm. When I wear it, I pay more attention to my behavior.

Q: Has anything interesting happened to you while you were wearing hanfu?

A: Advocating *hanfu* is a bittersweet experience - most people on the street are totally unable to understand us, or they don't even try.

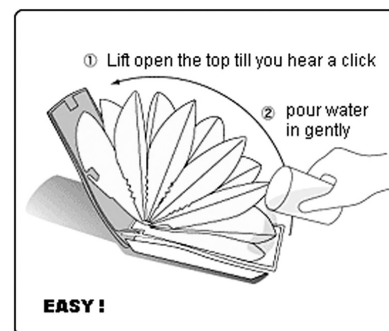
Q: What kinds of activities have you organized?

A: Aside from sacrifice activities, I've planned three wedding ceremonies. The bride and bridegroom wore *hanfu* and held a traditional ceremony. We had to piece together the proper procedure from many ancient texts.

A steamy shopping list

By Gan Tian

As the East 17 song goes, "Rise to the top, never stop. Drop like cream. You bring the body, and I'll bring the steam!" I thought long and hard before I figured out what he was bringing to his girlfriend ... a humidifier! After seeing a blue monster of a humidifier in my college, I decided to do a page on humidifiers this week.



6



5



3



1



7

1. Double dragon humidifier

Two dragons? Evil or good? It's time for you to take sides! Sadly, I think this is designed more as an art piece than as a humidifier. Shouldn't powerful dragons be hurling fire from their mouths? How do they end up spitting steam? When the dragons blow fire at each other, it must work something like a humidifier.

Available: apexrg.com
Price: US\$29.80

2. Fred dunkelgrau

This is from "Ellectrique Design," a website dedicated to designing 'elegant' electronic equipment. This might be something... no comment. After all, what do I know about 'art'? At least I know it's a humidifier and that the steam comes out from its long leg.

Available: e-d.nl
Price: About US\$40

3. Yadu humidifier

I'm recommending this only because it's by Yadu. They've always provided excellent after-sale service, and their products are very easy to use. The label includes many colorful and pretty products, but also many simple, useful ones. If you want a humidifier that

looks nice and runs well, try Yadu. It's the best humidifier brand in Beijing.

Available: Yadu shelf, B/1 Sunshine Plaza, Anli Lu, Yayuncun, Chaoyang

Price: 100-600 yuan (varies by type)

4. CyClops water

This page is printed in grayscale so you can't see the color on this one. It has a lovely light blue tint – just like a pool of fresh spring water. Put it in your bedroom to hear the call of nature while you sleep. It looks like the color of Aquarius. "Aquarius is stardust. It calls your name and you listen – and it steals your soul."

Available: F/5 Soshow Shopping Mall, Chongwenmen Wai Dajie, Chongwen

Price: 299 yuan

5. Humidifier by Plus Minus Zero version 3

White, yellow, blue, green, orange – five colorful rings.

Think you're competing in the Olympic Games? I think they look more like chocolate-covered doughnuts. Want a bite? I have no idea what the difference between a version 2 and version 3 humidifier is. To be honest, I couldn't find a version 2.

Available: compact-impact.com
Price: US\$279



8

6. Compact oasis

This travel-size box is anything but the traditional humidifier. At only 90 grams before adding water, it doesn't require any power to run. The box says, "Simply add water and this handy little gadget will keep your skin soft and your lungs breathing right." I trust advertising. Don't you?

Available: compact-impact.com
Price: US\$26.50

7. Mist of dreams

The name says it all – elegant. I'm sure it will be a favorite among starry-eyed girls who are drunk on love. Buy one for your girlfriend!

Available: F/5 Soshow Shopping Mall, Chongwenmen Wai Dajie, Chongwen
Price: 100-200 yuan

8. Philips humidifier

You watch a Philips television, you use Philips telephones, you may type on a Philips computer, but you've probably never heard of Philips humidifiers. It's ordinary-looking and lacks any special features – much like everything else made by Philips. But the choice is yours. You can find out whether or not it's good by yourself.

Available: any Gome Home Appliance store
Price: 278 yuan



4

Choosing and using an air humidifier

Notice the type. There are three main types sold: ultrasonic humidifiers, pure steam humidifiers and electronic. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, so choose whichever suits you.

Humidifiers need to be washed weekly to prevent bacteria build-up.

The most common problem is noise. It can range from a slight buzz to the roll of boiling water in a steam humidifier.

Ultrasonic humidifiers are the quietest since they don't use a fan. Another problem is 'white dust.' Tap water usually contains minerals that may settle on walls and furniture when vapors cool. You can solve this problem by adding special chemicals inside the humidifier through liquid, pads or cartridges. Using distilled water is another option.

If you want to show off your fashion store, have a great collection of fashion accessories and knick-knacks or just want to recommend the best places around town to find fun and flashy items, drop me a line at gantian@ynet.com or call 6590 2527.

By Huang Daohen

When you're sick, your nose feels like it's crammed full of cotton balls, you're unable to smell anything and breathing usually isn't an option.

Stuffy and runny noses have a multitude of causes: a

cold, the flu, even stress. Almost everyone experiences some problems at this time of the year, but we generally ignore them and wait for our air holes to clear up on their own.

Here are some tips on breathing easier till your cold runs its course.

Be aware

Runny nose

Glands in your nose continually produce mucus – as much as one to two quarts per day, Yang Guohua, a professor at Beijing University's Health Center, says. That mucus cleans and moisturizes your nasal membranes, and helps to fight infection. You're probably not aware just how much mucus your nose can make until a cold or flu kicks its production into overdrive. Cold temperatures, spicy food and hormonal changes can also trigger a runny nose.

Stuffy nose

The opposite problem, a stuffy nose, can be just as uncomfortable as a runny one. Often, the causes are the same: a cold or the flu, allergies to dust or pollen or an inflammation of the nasal blood vessels. Inflammation occurs when the blood vessels in your nose expand in response to exercise, cold air, spicy food and even stress.

Is it serious?

A runny or stuffy nose is usually just an

annoyance, but it can be a sign of a more serious problem. See your doctor if:

- You've tried home remedies for five days with no relief
- A stuffy nose troubles you at the same time every year
- You have a fever and facial pain
- You're producing thick, greenish or yellowish mucus
- Your stuffy nose interferes with sleep, or causing a snoring problem

Secrets to soothing seasonal sinus

What will help? Doctor's suggestions

Gentle blowing is often the only treatment needed for a runny nose. However, if discharge is persistent and watery, an over-the-counter antihistamine may be helpful especially if your runny nose is allergy related. Be sure to follow the instructions exactly.

Drawing out the cotton

One of the simplest ways to break up congestion, Yang suggests, is to inhale steam from a hot shower or a kettle of boiling water. Bring four to six cups of water to a boil, and then drape a bath towel over your head to concentrate the steam. Adding three drops of eucalyptus oil to the water may provide even more relief. Be patient! It may take 10 to 15 minutes for this method to work, but be sure to keep your face at least 18 inches from the water to avoid burning yourself.

Cut back on chocolate

Concentrated sweets, particularly chocolate, may trigger swelling in your nasal membranes, Yang says. So steer clear of the sweets aisle until your nose clears up.

Pile on the pepper

Cook with red pepper, Alexander Chester, a clinical professor of medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, DC, writes in his latest research. Capsaicin, the spicy component of red peppers, causes the mucus linings of your nose to step up their secretions. It'll make your nose runny and help clear it out, Chester says.

Chicken soup

Lots of soups are soothing, but chicken soup has been shown to speed movement of mucus through the nasal

passages. This helps relieve congestion and limits the amount of viruses in contact with the nasal lining.

Take a hot soak

When you come in from the cold after your walk, climb into a nice, hot bath, Chester says. It'll warm your entire body and increase nasal circulation, which has a decongesting effect, he says.

Check your medicines

Beware of over-the-counter medicines. A number of medications, including those for high blood pressure and high-dose estrogen, can cause nasal stuffiness. Let your doctor know about all medications you're taking, and ask him if switching medications would be helpful.

Make Happy hour a sober hour

When your nose is congested, avoid beer, wine and cordials, Chester says. The fermentation process used to create these beverages produces tannin, which will swell your nose further and block your sinus ducts. Red wine is worse than white, but distilled spirits may be less of a problem, he adds.

Read the tea leaves

A Chinese herb called ephedra is a good nasal decongestant, Yang says. You can often find it in teas in health food stores, but make sure you're getting real ephedra, since the American species equivalent lacks its active ingredient. Yang cautions that ephedra will also act as a mild stimulant, and should be avoided if you have high blood pressure or heart problems. Drink two cups per day until you feel better.

Home remedies

Squeeze a lemon into a cup, add a spoonful of honey and some hot water. Also, add some raw garlic to your dinner. This will definitely clear out your stuffy nose. You can also get some olibanum oil from a chemist and put a few drops on your clothing for instant relief.

— Lynne, an office lady

For a stuffy nose, I have used many things. Here are a few that have helped:

- Put a few drops of eucalyptus essential oil on your pillow at night before going to bed. It can help clear your sinus.
- Mix distilled water and kosher salt until the mixture is as salty as sea water. Warm the water a bit and test the temperature, then take a clean squirt bottle, tilt

your head back and gently flush your nose.

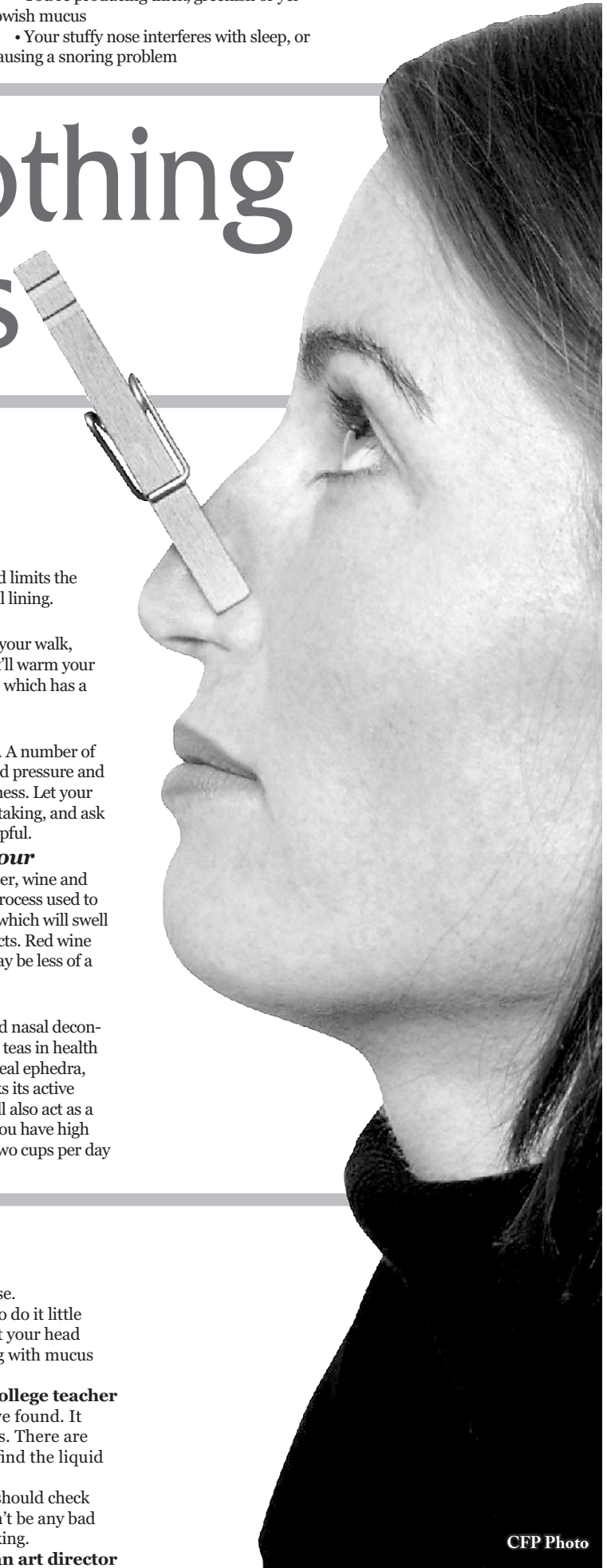
It won't suffocate you, but you have to do it little by little and not get excited. Then you tilt your head forward and let the water come out along with mucus and other yucky stuff.

— Sue Wallace, a college teacher

Sudafed decongestant is the best I've found. It really does work – unlike a lot of others. There are tablets, liquid and a nasal spray, but I find the liquid works best for me.

However, everyone is different. You should check with the pharmacist to be sure there won't be any bad interactions with what you're already taking.

— Chrisand, an art director



CFP Photo

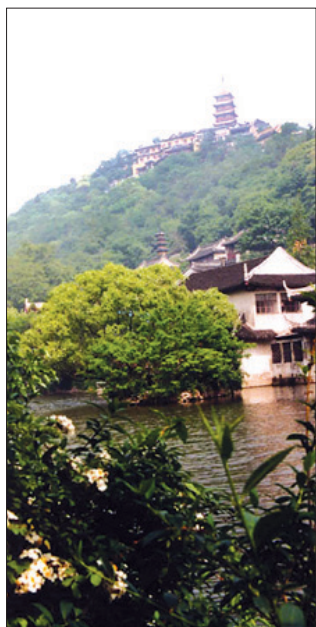
A paradise on the water



Photo by Chen Shasha



Haohe River is attractive by both night and day.



A resort on Langshan



Youfei Hotel is the city's most luxurious hotel.

Photo by Chen Shasha

By Chen Shasha

A famous Chinese saying goes, "Suzhou and Hangzhou are paradise on earth." I've been to Hangzhou and Suzhou, both located in southeast China, multiple times. I went to find the clean river, silent courtyards and a moment to dream away, but rushing tourists and rubbish often bothered me. I don't know if I can find a true 'paradise' in the fast developing world – a place where all the noises, worries and reconstruction stop, and you're only left with beautiful scenery and highly protected ancient buildings – until I arrived at Nantong, a small city in the north of Jiangsu province.

Museum City on the river

If you ask a taxi driver in Nantong what not to miss on a short visit, he'll surely point outside and say, "Here, all scenery around the Haohe River." It's no doubt that Nantong is a city on the water. The Haohe River, known as the Emerald Necklace of Nantong, surrounds the old city with a total length of 15km, covering an area of 80 hectares. Used to be a city moat, Haohe River is the only ancient moat in China, which remains intact and lies in the center of the city. In 2005, the Haohe River was awarded the prize the Best Living Environment in Jiangsu province.

Nantong is also known as the 'Museum City.' When you walk along the banks of the Haohe, you'll see how it got the name. Apart from three large museums – Nantong Museum, Nantong Construction Museum and Nantong City Planning Exhibition Center – there are as many as 10 small museums located around Haohe River. It's common to see an old courtyard home that, when entered, gives way to flowering courtyards, little dogs, and a full museum.

Some museums' names are unique, such as Abacus Museum, blue cloth print museum, kite museum and China's first Museum for Textiles. Many of the museums were former resi-

dences of Chinese notables who were raised in Nantong, such as Chen Gongshi, a famous Ming doctor; Li Fangying, a respected Qing scholar; Zhao Dan, a modern movie artist; and Yang Yue, a modern mathematician.

Nantong's flourishing culture owes a nod to Zhang Jian, the number one scholar and founder of the Qing Dynasty's Chinese modern national industry. He also founded museums, libraries, theaters and the first teacher-training schools in China at Nantong, which today has become Nantong University. The Zhang Jian Memorial is located in the center of the Haohe on a scenic spot.

If you're lucky enough to live in a riverside hotel and walk the bank at nightfall, the city becomes even more charming. The colorful lights and sparkling fountains alongside the floating river make the city seem like a dreamland. The noise fades away, and the night is left to young and old lovers walking side by side. According to my friend Xin Yue, a Nantong radio broadcaster, the river is an essential part of citizens' lives, and remains the place where many meet, fall in love and marry. She said Nantong is a city with more than 600 people over 100 years old. With its good climate, comfortable living environment and a long and beautiful river, is it any wonder?

Langshan

Driving from the center of Nantong towards the south, you'll see five small, green hills beside the Yangtze River: Junshan, Jianshan, Langshan, Ma'anshan and Huangnishan from east to west. Among them, Langshan is the most famous, and is one of China's Eight Lesser Buddhist Mountains.

Langshan has many temples. Guangjiao temple, its largest, is dedicated to a Song dynasty monk. The temple was built in 669 AD and has a history longer than a thousand years. Xinyue said that historically, the monk's legendary powers over water

demons drew many sailors to pray for protection on their voyages.

Langshan is no higher than 150 meters, but from its summit you can enjoy a spectacular view; the Yangtze River is at the southern foot, a large plain to the north, and the vast sea sprawls to the east. The hill is dotted with curious, purple stones which has led to its name 'Purple Hill.'

Langshan is not only a culture site, but also a health resort. It's not far from downtown Nantong, and a taxi trip costs as little as 20 yuan. The No 22 bus also goes directly.

Transportation

Nantong airport has only four incoming flights per day. The airport is located in Xindong, 18km from Nantong. One flight goes from Beijing to Nantong every day at 4 pm.

Nantong has two passenger trains to Huaian and Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. If you plan to visit other seaside cities from Nantong, it's a good idea to take a ship or bus. The No 4 bus offers transport to Nantong port, where ships leave regularly bound for Shanghai, Chongqing and Hankou.

The Nantong bus station is at No 86, Renmin Xi Lu, and many buses depart from there for cities in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces.

Xinyue said the Nantong railway station is under construction, and the Sutong (Suzhou to Nantong) Bridge over the Yangtze River will open in 2007. While it sounds like good news, the opening of a new railway will bring tourists flocking. Now may be the best chance to enjoy the quiet paradise – while it lasts.

Shen's Silk Museum was built in Shen Shou, a famous silk artist's ancient house.
Photo by Chen Shasha

CHIANG MAI:

Double royal celebration

By Jane Ram

Thailand is having a double celebration this year. Last year, 2006, marked the 60th anniversary of His Majesty's accession to the throne, and this year is the monarch's 80th birthday. Chiang Mai is celebrating with the rest of the country by staging a unique expo dedicated to flowers, leaves and lofty trees.

Royal Flora Expo – the show of a lifetime

Think orchids, lush foliage and heliconias like flock of exotic birds. See plants that you've only read about, discover others that you never knew existed and see familiar favorites in a new context. Welcome to Royal Flora, Thailand's most ambitious expo of plants and flowers! The spectacular 92-day show is open until January 31.

The sun was shining, and after a crisp night, the daytime temperature headed for the mid-20s as I waited at the entrance gate with thousands of eager visitors. The majority wore yellow shirts to express support for their ruler. The color was echoed in the beds of French marigolds that were being carefully groomed by two gardeners who beamed in true Thai style as we shuffled past.

Looking at the long lines of eager garden-goers around me, I wondered whether the show would be too crowded to be enjoyable, but once through the gates everyone had plenty of space.

This was a dazzling display of form and color, with some familiar varieties as well as many amazing hybrids listed as gold medal winners. The Thai Tropical

Garden was next on my priority list, and I enjoyed the attractions along the way, including the Shaded Paradise and the spectacular Bougainvilleas. I paused at the cool greenhouses to see the display on the modern techniques being employed in the hybridization and cloning of coffee, curcumas and orchids.

The expo has been timed to take advantage of the mild winter in northern Thailand, when humidity levels are low and temperatures are pleasant even at midday. It's located on the outskirts of Chiang Mai, and shuttle buses serve most of the city, as well as the nearby airport.

Chiang Mai attractions

Chiang Mai people are proud of their city and its long history as the capital of Lanna, the "land of a million rice fields." For seven centuries, Chiang Mai province was an independent kingdom, famous for its cultural and scholastic traditions and its rich heritage of local customs, including distinctive cuisine. Even today, Thailand's finest craftsmen are still concentrated in this part of the country. No matter where you buy handicrafts in Thailand, they were almost certainly made in Chiang Mai.

At only 300m above sea level, Chiang Mai is surrounded by mountains renowned for their natural beauty. Bangkok lies 700km to the south, and the province's northernmost border is across the river from Myanmar. The land is soft and gentle, which locals say encourages a leisurely pace of life and the laid-back, soft-spoken nature of the inhabitants. Thailand is the ideal country for walkers,

bird watchers and golfers.

Chiang Mai literally translates as "new town," dating back to the year 1293, when it was founded by King Mengrai. In recent decades, the city has grown fast as its population has soared to two million, making it the largest city in northern Thailand. New buildings include extraordinarily beautiful hotels along the banks of the Ping River, but the old way of life is still visible if you step away from the main roads to discover picturesque lanes with their traditional wooden houses shaded by mature trees.

Better still, make the one hour trip to Lampang, a small town where you can ride back through time in a horse-drawn carriage that transports you through streets of carved teak mansions. Don't miss the 1,000-year-old Lampang Temple on the outskirts of the city. Spend time looking at the mellow wood and stone carvings and the finely wrought metalwork.

Night Life

The newest evening attraction in Chiang Mai is the Night Safari park, close to the airport. Opened in late 2005, it attracts 10,000 people per night, all eager to watch exotic jungle animals in pseudo-natural surroundings. In their natural habitat, most tropical animals sleep through the heat of day, and are at their most active when temperatures drop after dusk.

Silent, electric trains carry visitors on an unusual safari illuminated by subdued lighting that mimics moonlight to enable visitors to watch the inhabitants, who remain seemingly oblivious of the outsiders.



A woman spins fine thread from silkworm cocoons.



Chiang Mai has magnificent teak mansions.



Local strawberry vendors await eager buyers.



Monks leave their monastery before dawn in search of donations.

Morning Call

The day begins early in Moon Muang Road, where Chiang Mai's 10,000 monks are out at first light, collecting donations before sunrise, when they must return to their monasteries. This is when devotees offer food and drink, flowers – especially Lotus buds, symbols of purity – candles, cash to fund welfare projects and other gifts. Most Thais are Buddhist, and they regard the temple as a central part of their lives. After donating, many Thais ask the monks to consecrate a bottle of water to pour onto the ground – an act to spread the blessing across the world.

Soon after sunrise, pilgrims flock to Wat Phrathat, Chiang Mai's iconic temple, over 1,000m up on Mount Suthep, just outside the city. Climb 290 steps (made from recycled railway sleepers) or pay 20 Baht to ride up in a cable car to see the early morning sun light up the golden chedi that houses sacred relics of the Buddha. It's moving to watch the young and old as make their rounds of these dazzling buildings. In clear conditions the temple offers the bonus of panoramic views over Chiang Mai city.

Shopping

If you are looking for local products, shopping in Chiang Mai means a visit to the Night Market; find wonderful and inexpensive food, especially fresh seafood, as well as hundreds of stalls selling all kinds of handicrafts and souvenirs. In daytime, head for Warorot (Central) Market to stock up on dried mango and local oolong tea. Allow time to browse through Northern Village department store at the Airport Plaza, where you should be sure to buy fragrant mountain honey from the Royal Projects in the basement supermarket. If you visit over a weekend, don't miss the Saturday – and especially the Sunday – market.

Travel Tips

Bangkok and Chiang Mai are well connected by air, road and rail, and direct flights link Chiang Mai and Hong Kong. The city is well supplied with hotel rooms at all price levels. Mandarin Oriental, Sheraton and the Regent are some of Chiang Mai's international hotels. For a local experience, pop online to find a family-run guesthouse.

Photos by Jane Ram



Wat Phrathat roof detail



Golden glory at Wat Phrathat

Dead Poets Society (1989)

Starring: Robin Williams, Ethan Hawke, Josh Charles, Robert Sean Leonard, Dylan Kussman

Director: Peter Weir

Synopsis:

Dead Poets Society tells the story of passionate English teacher John Keating, brilliantly portrayed by Robin Williams, who inspires his students to challenge the status quo imposed upon them by their prestigious private school. With much vigor and enthusiasm, Keating exclaims to his class, "Carpe Diem, lads! Seize the day. Make your lives extraordinary!" Taking this charge to heart, some of Keating's students reform the "Dead Poets Society" to celebrate the human spirit and to truly make each day extraordinary.

When Keating is forced out of his job by the school's administration, the students come to his defense, applying the passions for life and truth that Keating taught them, inside as well as, outside the classroom.

KEATING: Gentlemen, open your texts to page 21 of this introduction. Mr Perry, will you read the opening paragraph of the preface entitled "Understanding Poetry"?

NEIL: "Understanding Poetry" by Dr J Evans Pritchard, PhD. To fully understand poetry, we must first be fluent with its meter, rhyme and figures of speech, then ask two questions: 1) How artfully has the objective of the poem been rendered(1) and 2) How important is that objective? Question one rates the poem's perfection; question two rates its importance. And once these questions have been

again. You will learn to savor(7) words and language. No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world. Now I see that look in Mr Pitts' eye, like 19th century literature has nothing to do with going to business school or medical school. Right? Maybe. Mr Hopkins, you may agree with him, thinking, "Yes, we should simply study our Mr Pritchard and learn our rhyme and meter and go quietly about the business of achieving other ambitions." I've a little secret for you. Huddle up(8). Huddle up!

KEATING: We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering – these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love – these are what we stay alive for. (To quote from Whitman)

O me! O life! of the question of these recurring,
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the foolish...

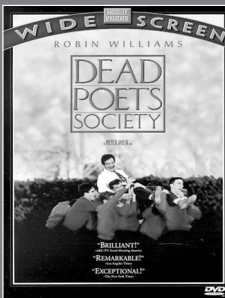
What good amid these O me, O life?

(Answer)

That you are here – That life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

KEATING: "That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse." What will your verse be?

BOYS: For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly grateful, Amen.



answered, determining the poem's greatness becomes a relatively simple matter."

NEIL: "If the poem's score for perfection is plotted on the horizontal of a graph and its importance is plotted on the vertical, then calculating the total area of the poem yields the measure of its greatness."

NEIL: "A sonnet by Byron might score high on the vertical but only average on the horizontal. A Shakespearean sonnet, on the other hand, would score high both horizontally and vertically, yielding a massive total area, thereby revealing the poem to be truly great. As you proceed through the poetry in this book, practice this rating method. As your ability to evaluate poems in this matter grows, so will your enjoyment and understanding of poetry."

KEATING: Excrement(2). That's what I think of Mr J Evans Pritchard. We're not laying pipe(3). We're talking about poetry. How can you describe poetry like *American Bandstand*(4)? "Oh, I like Byron. I give him a 42, but I can't dance to it." Now, I want you to rip out(5) that page.

KEATING: Go on. Rip out the entire page. You heard me. Rip it out. Rip it out! Go on. Rip it out!

KEATING: Thank you, Mr Dalton. Gentlemen, tell you what. Don't just tear out that page, tear out the entire introduction. I want it gone. History. Leave nothing of it. Rip it out! Rip! Be gone, J Evans Pritchard, PhD. Rip. Shred. Tear. Rip it out! I want to hear nothing but ripping of Mr Pritchard. We'll perforate(6) it, put it on a roll. It's not the Bible. You're not gonna go to hell for this.

KEATING: Go on. Make a clean tear. I want nothing left of it.

CAMERON: We shouldn't be doing this.

KEATING: Rip! Rip! Rip! Rip it out! Rip! Rip it out!

McALLISTER: What the hell is going on here?

KEATING: I don't hear enough rips!

McALLISTER: Mr Keating.

KEATING: Mr McAllister.

McALLISTER: I'm sorry. I, I didn't know you were here.

KEATING: I am. Ah.

McALLISTER: So you are. Excuse me.

KEATING: Keep ripping, gentlemen! This is a battle. A war. And the casualties could be your hearts and souls. Thank you, Dalton. Armies of academics going forward, measuring poetry. No! We'll not have that here. No more Mr J Evans Pritchard. Now, my class, you will learn to think for yourselves

McALLISTER: Quite an interesting class you gave today, Mr Keating.

KEATING: Sorry if I shocked you, Mr McAllister.

McALLISTER: Oh, there's no need to apologize. It was very fascinating, misguided though it was.

KEATING: You think so?

McALLISTER: You take a big risk by encouraging them to become artists, John. When they realize that they're not Rembrandts(9), Shakespeares or Mozarts, they'll hate you for it.

KEATING: We're not talking artist, George. We're talking free thinkers.

McALLISTER: Free thinkers at seventeen?

KEATING: Funny. I never pegged you as a cynic.

McALLISTER: Not a cynic(10). A realist. "Show me the heart unfettered(11) by foolish dreams and I'll show you a happy man."

KEATING: "But only in their dreams can men be truly free. 'Twas always thus, and always thus will be."

McALLISTER: Tennyson?

KEATING: No. Keating.

Vocabulary:

(1) render: to perform

(2)excrement: the solid waste matter passed from the body through the bowels

(3)lay pipe: the act of excreting

(4)American Bandstand: an American TV show about rock and roll that was broadcast from the 50s to 80s

(5)rip out: tear out

(6)perforate: to make a hole or holes through (something)

(7)savor: to enjoy slowly and purposefully

(8)huddle up: to (cause to) crowd together, in a group or in a pile

(9)Rembrandt: Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn (b. July 15, 1606, Leiden, Neth. –d. Oct 4, 1669, Amsterdam), Dutch painter, draftsman and etcher of the 17th century, a giant in the history of art

(10)cynic: someone who thinks that people tend to act only in their own interests, and who always has a low opinion (sometimes unfairly) of people's reasons for doing things

(11)unfettered: free from control; not tied by severe rules

(By He Jianwei)



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This column is open to those who want to improve their English but lack foreign specialized help. We will review the English articles you send to Shirley_chen@ynet.com. Suggestions will be

given on how to improve the Chinglish sentences in your articles. All interesting stories are welcome. Please be sure the article is written in English, around 500 words in total. Please do not forget to include your name and address.

The coming of the first winter vacation



Hutong children happily playing when winter vacation coming.

CFP photo

By Meng Qingyun

The first winter vacation was coming. And several days earlier he had already booked the ticket back home. College life was colorful. Before he went to college, he was leading a boring, tedious life and curious about everything in the outer space. Since he entered the college, the first satisfactory coming to him was his roommate's MP3 player, which gave him a lot of pleasure. Some day he hoped to have his own one. So as soon as he went back, he asked his father for money to buy one. However, the whole family seemed to fell down with his high tuition for the

college. He had known this. But he couldn't prevent him from the temptation of the entertainments. When hearing his demand, his father was astonished and seemed to be ignorant.

In order to pay for the tuition, the family had been in debt. As a father, he shouldn't let his son drop out of school even in the way of begging. At times, he took pride in his son who had successfully graduated from the senior middle school and enrolled in an important university when talking with neighbors, which gave the hope of his survival. In the son's childhood, his mother

died of cancer. From that time onward, he lifted up the whole family himself in the rain of bitterness and poverty. Through so many years' hard work, he got a serious disease. He loved his son deeply and the son was his only hope. So he would like to make every effort to meet the son's demands. However, the family was too poor to afford any money to buy anything. How else could he do?

On hearing his son's demand, he felt sorry, bit his lips and sat quietly, with smoke from his yellow mouth. Like his father, the son also seemed wordless

just at that moment and went directly to his own room. The next day, he started to return without any money for the MP3 player. When he arrived at his dorm, he unfolded his pack bag. In the bottom, he suddenly caught a sight of three pieces of money bills worth 300 yuan that he knew was his father's total income for three months' labor work. And he also knew the money was used for his father to see the doctor. At the moment, he wanted to do nothing but have a long loud cry.

Meng Qingyun is a student at the Beijing Forestry University

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify chinglish in public areas. If you see any chinglish signs, please take a picture and send them to Shirley_chen@ynet.com with your name and address.

Key of Key Medical Laboratory: Chinese PLA



Photo by Shirley Chen

By Derrick Sobodash

This photo was snapped right here in Beijing. The key of key laboratory left me wondering: is there a key of key of key lab somewhere else in the building?

'Key of key' is an incredibly odd construction in English: odd enough where several years of editing Chinese native speakers' English never led me to encounter it. The Chinese doesn't mean 'key of key' so much as 'most important.' Medical laboratory is fine – there are no problems with that translation. As for 'Chinese PLA,' well, there aren't a lot of other ways to write that.

The more I stare at this sign, the more curious I get. Even the Chinese has something a little ominous about it. It leaves me wondering, "What are those naughty PLA scientists up to behind these doors?" I guess the answer would be, "We're doing 'key of key' research."

This sign could use an overhaul in both languages. What kind of medical lab is this? Is it a research lab? A testing lab?

There was a guard next to the sign and it's the PLA, so it's reasonable for something to be kept secret. Still, if the sign had a proper translation, like "Chinese PLA's Most Important Medical Lab," I'd feel even more curious.



English expert's reply

First of all, I just want to say how refreshing it is to read something written in a narrative style.

The first several sentences of your opening paragraph are strong and help to introduce the scene. In the third sentence, however, there's a problem concerning logic: 'a boring, tedious life and curious about everything.' Usually someone who lives a boring life is not 'curious' about things, so instead of saying 'and curious' you could say 'yet was curious' to show that it's not in keeping with the rest of his character or life.

In the next sentence, you should change 'satisfactory' from an adjective to a noun 'satisfaction' or 'piece of satisfaction.' Following, we wouldn't say that a family 'fell down with high tuition' so much as we would say, 'was burdened by' or 'suffered under the weight of' high tuition.

I would also suggest replacing 'temptation of the entertainments' to 'the temptation of entertainment.' 'Entertainment' is uncountable so you don't need 'the' because it is used here in general terms.

In the second paragraph, you should change 'shouldn't' to 'couldn't' to reflect the proper tense. 'Shouldn't' refers to right or wrong, for example, 'you shouldn't smoke.' 'Couldn't', on the other hand, means can not. In the same sentence, I would also suggest that 'even in the way of begging' sets the wrong tone. Instead of saying 'even,' you might write something like, 'he couldn't let his son drop out of school because he knew that all that would be waiting for him was a life of begging.' Here, you want to emphasize that a life of begging is not desirable.

Also, it's a bit problematic to

say enrolling in a university 'gave the hope of his survival.' In English, 'survival' means just barely getting enough food to eat, so by getting into university, you can see that it's much more than surviving. Instead, you might say, 'which gave hope that he could lead a better life.' Later in the paragraph, you strike the wrong verb tense when you say, 'he would like to make every effort.' Here, you want to keep it in the simple past and say, 'he wanted to make every effort.' Your final sentence of paragraph two, 'How else could he do' also reflects a common mistake. Instead, you should say, 'What else could he do?'

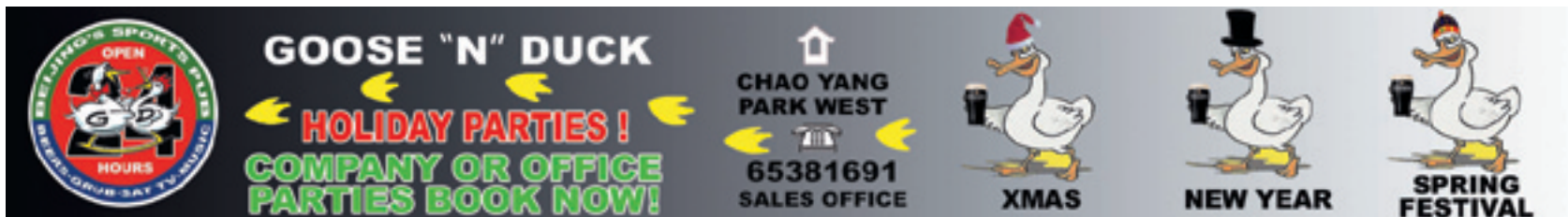
The first sentence of your third paragraph paints a vivid picture, but you forget a word or two when you say, 'with smoke from his yellow mouth.' What you're missing here is a verb and an explanation for the smoke. You

might try something like this: 'he felt sorry, bit his lips and sat quietly, puffing on the remains of his cigarette, as smoke poured out of the side of his yellow mouth.' Two sentences further, you again need to add more detail as you mention that the son 'started to return' but you don't say from where. You might say, 'he started his trip back to school.'


Remember, one of the keys to writing a good narrative passage is to add as much detail and texture as possible. It's an opportunity to play around with words and improve your language skills, and I think here you were generally quite successful. You obviously don't have many grammar mistakes, so keep challenging yourself.

Good luck,
Kirk


Kirk Kenney is an English teacher at New Channel School.




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NEW YEAR



SPRING FESTIVAL

Friday, January 5

Exhibition Post-80s Avant-garde Artists Series Exhibitions Phase II



Where: Amelie Art Gallery,
3/F 19 Building, China Central
Place, 89 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang
When: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm,
until February 28
Admission: Free
Tel: 6530 7048

Liu Xiao's Oil Painting and Photography Exhibition

Where: Beijing Russian Art
Gallery, No 2 Changpocun,

Dongsanhuan Zhonglu,
Chaoyang
When: Daily 9am-6pm,
until January 10
Admission: free
Tel: 6776 8593

Movie La Repetition



Nathalie and Louise are
childhood friends. While
studying drama at university,
Louise becomes hopelessly
obsessed with her friend.
Jealous of the male friends
Nathalie has, Louise breaks
up the friendship, then
attempts suicide.



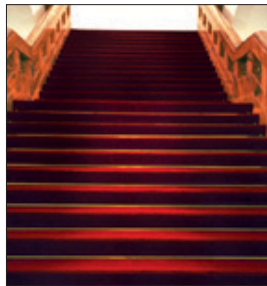
Later, Louise marries, but
finds time to see her old friend,
who by now has become quite
an accomplished actress. *La
Repetition* follows the two
women as they frequently fight,
then patch things up, while
never actually reaching anything

that can be called a climax.

Where: French Culture
Center, 18 Guangcai Interna-
tional Apartments, Gongti Xi
Lu, Chaoyang
When: 8pm, until January 6
Admission: 10-20 yuan
Tel: 6553 2627

Saturday, January 6

Exhibition Feng Yan Solo Exhibition



Where: Courtyard Gallery,
No 53 Dongbianmen Dajie,
Dongcheng
When: Tue-Sun 11am-7pm,
until February 6
Admission: Free
Tel: 6526 8882

Abiao Solo Exhibition

Where: Artist Village Gallery,

No 1 Renzhuangcun Bei, Song-
zhuang, Tongzhou
When: Daily 8am-mid-
night, until January 26
Admission: Free
Tel: 6959 8343

Movie Trois Couleurs: Bleu (Three Colors: Blue)



Trois Colors: Bleu is the first
part of Kieslowski's trilogy on
France's national motto: Liberty,
Equality and Fraternity. *Bleu* is
the story of Julie who loses her
husband, an acclaimed Euro-
pean composer, and her young
daughter in a car accident.

The film's theme of liberty is
manifested in Julie's attempt to
start life anew free of personal
commitments and material
attachments. She intends to
commit spiritual suicide by
withdrawing from the world.
However, the people who care
about her draw her back to the
land of the living.

Where: French Culture
Center, 18 Guangcai Interna-
tional Apartments, Gongti Xi
Lu, Chaoyang

When: 6pm, until January 10
Admission: 10-20 yuan
Tel: 6553 2627

Music Mondialito and Torte Bus

Mondialito is a duo who
serenades through French
songs, while Torte Bus is a
Chinese band famous for their
Northern European-influenced
indie-pop.

Where: 13 Club, No 161
Chengfu Lu, Haidian
When: 9pm
Admission: 50-80 yuan
Tel: 8262 8077



Sunday, January 7

Exhibition Post Period of Insects – Feng Shu Solo Exhibition



Where: F2 Gallery, No 319
Caochangdi, Chaoyang
When: Daily 10:30am-6pm,

until February 16
Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 8831

Movie L'esquive (Games of Love and Chance)



It's a tale of love and friend-
ship that recasts the famous
play *Games of Love and Chance*
in a present-day French outer
city ghetto. As a group of high
school students rehearse the
play for a school performance,
they also struggle with their
own worlds backstage – a hous-
ing project – to discover their
own conflicted feelings of amo-
rous rivalry and class identity.

Where: French Culture
Center, 18 Guangcai Interna-
tional Apartments, Gongti Xi
Lu, Chaoyang
When: 8pm, until January 10
Admission: 10-20 yuan

Tel: 6553 2627

Music Panjir

Free Jazz performed by Tato,
David, Akbar and Mahmut.
Where: Jiangjinjiu Bar, No
2 Zhongku Hutong, Dongcheng
When: 9:30pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8405 0124



Stage in February

Music

Golden Songs of Teresa Teng Symphony Concert

Who: China Broadcasting
Symphony Orchestra
Where: Zhongshan Music
Hall, inside Zhongshan Park,
Dongcheng

When: 7:30pm, February 14
Admission: 80-980 yuan

Spring Festival Symphony Concert

Who: Russian Symphony
Orchestra
Where: Poly Theater, No 14
Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng
When: 7:30pm, February 18
Admission: 50-1,000 yuan

2007 Spring Concert

Who: China National Opera
Where: Great Hall of the
People, West side of Tiananmen
Square, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, February 9
Admission: 100-1,280 yuan

Mantovani Orchestra

Pop Concert

Who: The Mantovani
Orchestra (Italy)
Where: Great Hall of the
People, West side of Tiananmen
Square, Xicheng
When: 7:30pm, February 7
Admission: 180-1,680 yuan

Dance

Swan Lake

Who: Russian National Ballet
Theatre and Russian Symphony
Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, No 14
Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng
When: 7:30pm,
February 12-13
Admission: 80-1,280 yuan

Sleeping Beauty

Who: Russian National Ballet
Theatre and Russian Symphony
Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, No 14
Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng
When: 7:30pm,
February 14-15
Admission: 80-1,280 yuan

British Modern Dance

Who: Henry Oguike Dance
Company (UK)
Where: Tianqiao Theatre, No
30 Beiwei Lu, Xuanwu
When: 7:30pm,
February 14-15
Admission: 80-800 yuan

Don Quixote

Who: Russian National Ballet
Theatre and Russian Symphony
Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, No 14
Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng
When: 7:30pm, February 19
Admission: 80-1,280 yuan

Giselle

Who: Russian National Ballet
Theatre and Russian Symphony
Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, No 14
Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng
When: 7:30pm,
February 20-21
Admission: 80-1,280 yuan

(By Qiu Jiaoning)